

**HOW TO
DEFEAT ISIS**
LEE SMITH

the weekly

Standard

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A Conservative Takes on Climate Change

STEVEN F. HAYWARD

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All's Orwell That Ends Orwell

April 4 rapidly approaches, the day that Winston Smith begins his illicit diary in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. It is thus the day that indie theaters across the country have chosen for a protest-screening of the 1984 movie version of George Orwell's dystopian tale. The movie houses are calling out, of course, the Trump administration: "Orwell's portrait of a government that manufactures their own facts, demands total obedience, and demonizes foreign enemies, has never been timelier," declared organizers of the showing. (In doing so, they bravely put themselves at risk—of rotator-



cuff injuries, what with all the back-patting.)

THE SCRAPBOOK can't help but wonder whether the protesters proclaiming the grim Orwellian moment have ever read the novel or seen the movie. For the differences between Oceania in 1984 and Washington in 2017 are pronounced. For example, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the state menaces, with peckish rats, any poor sod unwilling to agree with the government that two plus two is five; in *Twenty Seventeen*, the president tweets that two plus two is five and is promptly buried under an avalanche of outraged fact-checking. Some other differences:

| In 1984... | In 2017... |
|--|--|
| The Inner Party ruthlessly exercises complete control over what is and is not true. | That job belongs to the <i>New York Times</i> . |
| BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU. | GOOGLE IS WATCHING YOU. |
| Any record of an "unperson" is systematically eradicated, thrown down the Memory Hole. | Those who find themselves overexposed on the Internet beg for the Right to Be Forgotten. |
| The Thought Police are based at the Ministry of Love. | The Thought Police are based at one's local university. |
| Everyone is expected to participate in the Two Minutes Hate. | Two Minutes? That's a mere warm-up for the left's daily fury. |

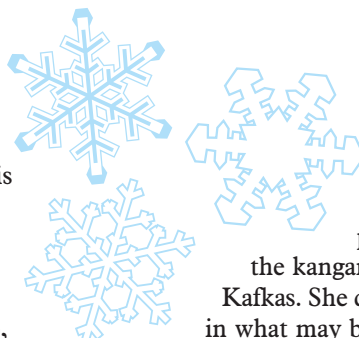
And yet, for all these differences, there are parts of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that are all too applicable to our current situation. For example, part of Winston Smith's world are the ubiquitous telescreens that can never be turned off, nor

their sound completely muted. In *Twenty Seventeen*, anyone who has sat through a half-hour of forced CNN consumption at an airport will know the oppressive feeling, and will instinctively reach for the synthetic Victory Gin. ♦

Forecast: More Snowflakes

Northwestern University professor Laura Kipnis is no right-winger. A self-described feminist who has written extensively for such publications as *Harper's*, *Slate*, *Vox*, and the *New York Times Book Review*, her leftist bona fides would not seem to be in question. At least, that was until two years ago, when she wrote for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* an article titled "Sexual Paranoia Strikes Academe."

As if to prove her thesis that sexual politics on campus have become toxic, a gaggle of students marched on the university president's office to demand "a swift, offi-



cial condemnation" of her essay. When that didn't happen, things turned ugly and thuggish: Her detractors filed Title IX complaints, dragging her into one of the kangaroo courts designed by the campus Kafkas. She detailed the ordeal for the *Chronicle*, in what may be the essential essay on the wacky, brutal intolerance of the modern university: "My Title IX Inquisition." Must reading.

The notoriety born of the controversy follows her, as when she spoke recently at Wellesley College on the abuses of Title IX. Refreshingly, there was neither violence nor

serious attempts to silence her. “What actually happened was that there was a lively back and forth after I spoke. The students were smart and articulate, including those who disagreed with me,” Kipnis told the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE). Could things on campus be looking up?

Don’t bet on it. Students aren’t the only would-be commissars: In the wake of Kipnis’s talk, six professors on Wellesley’s Commission for Ethnicity, Race, and Equity penned an aggrieved letter complaining about speakers with “objectionable beliefs,” who “impose on the liberty of students, staff, and faculty at Wellesley.” Free speech is just code, you see, for “the bullying of disempowered groups.”

Which suggests that snowflakes aren’t so much born as made. “When dozens of students tell us they are in distress as a result of a speaker’s words, we must take these complaints at face value,” said the Commission for Ethnicity, Race, and Equity. It’s a type of distress that can be avoided, you see, if the commissioners are simply given a veto: “We in CERE are happy to serve as a sounding board when hosts are considering inviting controversial speakers, to help sponsors think through the various implications of extending an invitation.” THE SCRAPBOOK has no doubt they would be very happy indeed.

To her credit, Kipnis is having none of it. “As someone who’s been teaching for a long time, and wants to see my students able to function in the world post-graduation,” she told FIRE, “protecting students from the ‘distress’ of someone’s ideas isn’t education, it’s a \$67,000 babysitting bill.” ♦

Bully, Bully

First lady Melania Trump, looking for a suitable role in her husband’s administration, has declared she will be an advocate for bullied youth.

“Children and teenagers can be fragile,” Mrs. Trump proclaimed in November. “Our culture has gotten too mean and too rough, especially to children and to teenagers.” She



pledged to protect those who are mocked or bullied.

She has yet to take up that mantle, but if Melania is looking to get going, she might want to take note of a new effort in Norway, which would appear to be a hotbed of toddler-on-toddler abuse. According to Norwegian news



site thelocal.no, the municipality of Oslo has felt obliged to appoint “a permanent official to fight bullying in the Norwegian capital’s schools from daycare age upwards.”

That’s right. Norway’s bullying epidemic is so severe that an educational bureaucrat is being tasked with nipping it in the “daycare age” bud. This terrible situation is all the more shocking when you consider that the World Happiness Report this year named Norway the happiest country on earth. That must mean that even the happiest children on earth are calling each other names. Count THE SCRAPBOOK as profoundly disillusioned.

But at least there’s no shortage of

WITH APOLOGIES TO ERNIE BUSHMILLER

helpers eager to help. More than a hundred educational professionals applied to be the official anti-bullying ombudsperson. The position was awarded to Kjerstin Owren, who promised to be visible: "It must be easy for children and young people to know how they can get in touch with the bullying ombudsman," she said. It was not clear how she planned to make sure the tykes in daycare would be able to reach her. ♦

Left to Their Devices

Who knew criminal justice reform would come with iPad knockoffs? The Hoosier state's department of corrections has proposed putting computer tablets "in every Indiana inmate's hands," the *Indianapolis Star* reports. The electronic devices will come with the potential to access self-help materials, menus from the chow hall—and fun and games.

As in several other states that make tablet computers available to felons, officials "expect to use entertainment to reward good behavior," the *Star* writes. "For example, an offender could be encouraged to stop racking up conduct reports in order to play more games." Prison being, in terms of trapped tedium, not unlike a long family car trip, the devices are appealing to the warden for the same reason Mom gives the kids the iPad in the minivan—pacification. The marketing slogan for one company selling electronics tailored for convicts is "Busy inmates are well-behaved inmates." Or, one might just as well say to those in lockup: *Don't get angry—get Angry Birds*.

Of course, the high-minded goal is to get the inmates to use the computers for educational purposes. "If we don't allow offenders to have real-world access to education, to programming, to electronic devices—then we've become part of the problem," said an Indiana corrections official. Rutgers professor Todd Clear added that it's a problem when offenders walk free and "don't know how to download stuff" or "how to search."

Ah yes, Google, that terrible cause of recidivism.

THE SCRAPBOOK thinks that assuming they "don't know how to download stuff" is selling inmates short. Given a chance, some behind bars display a precocious knowledge of computer programming, a savvy they combine with a can-do sort of coding creativity. When the Napa County, Calif., jail tried making tablets available to its guests back in 2015 it found that several inmates were attempting factory resets, trying to hack their way through the devices' security walls.

Which makes us wonder: When they lock up notorious characters such as Guccifer, what kind of computer do they give them? ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

It was a half-hour before one of the sparsely attended committee hearings that take place almost every day on Capitol Hill—in this case, a session on energy infrastructure so dry it would not merit even the presence of a C-SPAN camera. But in Al Franken's suite of offices . . .

—Karen Tumulty,
Washington Post



More Sentences We Didn't Finish

The US Public Broadcasting Service is one of the country's most-trusted national institutions. From dogged reporting on everything from the election to antics in the White House, its flagship news programme is a beacon . . .

—Tomos Lewis
Monocle

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Money Talks—in My Case Softly

I am about to do something that my eminently sensible father would have disapproved of: write a check to a politician. True, it is to be a small check, one for only \$200, but its recipient, the alderwoman of the first ward in Evanston, Illinois, my ward, seems to me an exceptional person. Still, however small the domain of her activity, a politician she (Judy Fiske is her name) remains, and I was brought up to believe that you do not give money to politicians, unless, that is, you wish to own them.

In Chicago, where I grew up, all politicians were considered guilty until proven innocent, which, as it turned out, few were. Aldermen in the Chicago City Council in those days earned a salary of \$20,000. “These guys are ready to spend a quarter of a million dollars or more for a job that pays \$20,000,” my father once said, a twinkle in his eye. “Something here doesn’t quite add up, wouldn’t you say?”

Not giving money to politicians, in the Chicago of my youth, did not preclude buying them. My father did a certain amount of business at the Illinois State Fair, and to insure his doing so smoothly he “had” a politician, a state senator with the name (as best I can recall) of Dicky Neapolitano. My mother, who hadn’t the least interest in politics, was always courteous when visited round election time by our Democratic precinct captain. You could never tell, after all, when you might need the old boy to get you a special parking permit or to be excused from jury duty. “But if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good.” Had Aristotle visited Chicago, his *Politics* might have been written differently.

Once imbued with the notion of politics Chicago-style, it is difficult to

take politicians altogether seriously. Senator Dick Durbin announces his deep care for the poor, and all I can think of is how many millions he must have scoffed up from various deals put in his way by lobbyists and others during his 20 years in the Senate. I was not long ago asked to sign a petition for term limits for politicians and did so, informing the petitioner that I thought perhaps 35 minutes might be the appropriate limit for holding any political office.



My apartment in Evanston is directly across the street from Whole Foods. I cannot recall the comedian who said that if one wanted to form a Tea Party of the left the best place to start would be trolling the parking lot at Whole Foods, but he wasn’t far from wrong. Young people bearing petitions for good causes frequently work the sidewalk in front of Whole Foods. Some while ago I readily agreed to signing a petition approving gay marriage, remarking as I signed that I hoped this would insure that gays would undergo all the sufferings that heterosexuals have done during divorce. An amiable young woman wearing a Greenpeace vest recently approached me, causing me to hold up my hand and, without breaking stride, say, “Obviously you cannot tell a fascist face when you see one.” A wise-guy, a kibbitzer, a man fundamentally

unserious about politics—that, I don’t mind admitting, is me.

So why did I, with tremulous fingers, write a \$200 check to my local alderman, in the hope of returning her to office? To make a short story even shorter, mine begins and ends with my hearing Ms. Judy Fiske talk one evening in the living room of a neighbor who lives in our building. On that occasion she was not especially prepossessing, physically or intellectually. What was attractive about her was her obvious regard for the neighborhood we both inhabit. She has lived in Evanston for decades, as have I. She could name every building in the ward

and seemed to know the history of each of them. She was immensely knowledgeable about which stores were moving in and out of the neighborhood: Barnes & Noble could soon depart, Mariano’s possibly come in.

Judy Fiske has a clear view, vision even, of what those of us who appreciate living here find so attractive about the place and why. She may be a Democrat, but her instincts, as I read them, are conservative. She wishes above all to preserve those things that make

our neighborhood so amiable. She seems quite as interested in urban aesthetics as in tax-base. She has, a neighbor told me, always been on the *qui vive* for large chain operations attempting to pull the wool over our toes by putting up shoddy or even ugly buildings. She has also been impressively responsive to small but real problems—broken-up alleyways, truck traffic—encountered by our building. She works full time at a job that pays an annual salary of \$12,784–\$24,648, if you add in benefits. The word has been so tarnished by overuse in recent years that a 20-year moratorium needs to be placed on it, but the plain fact is that she cares. She is my kind of pol.

Now, my less-than-munificent check written, where the hell is a postage stamp?

JOSEPH EPSTEIN

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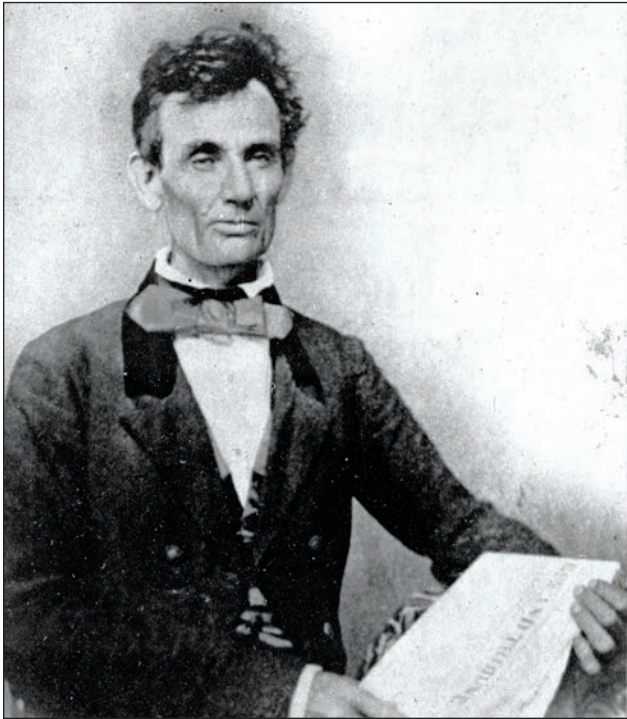
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‘Our Progress in Degeneracy’



‘Our progress in degeneracy appears to me to be pretty rapid.” So Abraham Lincoln wrote on August 24, 1855, to his friend Joshua Speed. Is it melodramatic to worry that the statement appears apt today?

Lincoln was primarily concerned about the state of the nation. But he also knew in 1855 that the party he’d been affiliated with and loyal to his entire adult life—the Whig party—was doomed. Lincoln spent much of that year and the next few years helping to organize a new party, the Republican party. Almost providentially, the Republicans rose out of the ashes of the Whigs, won the presidential election of 1860, and saved the nation.

Unfortunately, that new party didn’t prevail in the election of 1856. The Republicans contested the election vigorously but fell short, taking 11 of the 31 states and about a third of the popular vote. The Democrats under James Buchanan staggered to victory with 45 percent, benefiting from a split in the opposition, as the American Party (the “Know-Nothings”) under Millard Fillmore won about 22 percent of the electorate.

The consequences of Buchanan’s victory were dire. Who knows whether a united opposition would have won the election of 1856? Who knows if a different administration

in power in the late 1850s could have averted civil war four years later?

Still, we have to admire the efforts of the new Republicans. Take a look back to their platform of 1856, and you can’t help but be impressed. You’re impressed by its ringing endorsement of “the principles promulgated in the Declaration of Independence, and embodied in the federal constitution,” and by its resistance to the expansion of slavery. But reading it today, you’re also struck by two other propositions.

Resolved, That the highwayman’s plea, that “might makes right,” embodied in the Ostend Circular, was in every respect unworthy of American diplomacy, and would bring shame and dishonor upon any government or people that gave it their sanction.

The Ostend circular has faded into the mists of history. It was a document written by American ministers in Europe from President Franklin Pierce’s administration who met in Ostend, Belgium, in 1854. The document justified the use of force to seize Cuba from Spain for the sake of expanding U.S. slaveholding territories. (One of those ministers was James Buchanan, the next Democratic president.) When made public at the demand of the House of Representatives, the Ostend circular was widely denounced.

What is striking is that Ostend was denounced not just because of its particulars, but because, as the Republican platform suggests, the principle it seemed to embody and to recommend as a basis for American foreign policy was might makes right.

In this respect one might characterize the Ostend circular as an early example of an “America first” foreign policy, a policy decisively untethered from the necessity of self-defense or the cause of liberty and self-government. Not to put too fine a point on it, the Ostend circular was Trumpian in spirit.

And here’s the final resolution of the Republican platform of 1856:

Resolved, That we invite the affiliation and cooperation of the men of all parties, however differing from us in other respects, in support of the principles herein declared; and believing that the spirit of our institutions, as well as the Constitution of our country, guarantees liberty of conscience and equality of rights among citizens, we oppose all legislation affecting their security.

The new Republican party sought both to stand on principle and to construct a big tent. It did so by emphasizing

agreement on what the party opposed rather than on what precisely it favored. This is what new parties tend to do. The example suggests the possibility of a party based on principle but welcoming to many adherents.

What does this ancient history have to do with us? It's probably alarmist, and it's surely premature, to suggest we need a new party to defend "the spirit of our institutions, as well as the constitution of our country." But it would also be foolish complacency to deny the possibility might arise.

Consider the last week alone: The Republican president continues to speak out with no recognition of the normal proprieties of the presidential office, no appreciation for the dignity of the nation he represents, and no acknowledgment that he should be constrained by the truth. Meanwhile, the president appoints his daughter a White House adviser, and empowers her husband to be involved in delicate matters of foreign policy. Nepotism is a fact of life, but it would be foolish to deny that unabashed nepotism is evidence of progress in degeneracy.

At the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, the Republican chairman of the House Intelligence Committee receives information he believes troubling about the behavior of members of the preceding administration with respect to the incoming one. Rather than convening his committee and putting its staff to work, he holds a confused and hasty press conference and hurries off to the White House to brief all the president's men.

On a different level, the House Republican leadership so loses the forest for the trees in devising strategy for the repeal of Obamacare that it succeeds in alienating conservatives, moderates, and the public—all in the service of a strategy very likely to fail even in the short term, and a policy that fails to fundamentally change the big government program the Republicans have been committed to replacing. And all of this must be rushed through for the sake of clearing the way for a tax reform that also hasn't been sold to the American people or, to be honest, justified on the merits.

This is not the behavior of a healthy party. We say this with reluctance, because we're inclined to the view that the current Republican party—featuring lots of attractive young politicians, with most of its elected members sound on principles of limited government at home and the defense of liberty abroad—could easily right itself from this recent bout of dizziness. But nothing is foreordained. Dizziness can sometimes be a symptom of a more serious problem.

We hope and trust that the Republican party can be restored to vigor. But if the Republicans cannot rediscover the spirit of liberty, surely we need not be condemned forever to alternating between mindless progressivism and witless reaction. Resigning ourselves to such a choice will only contribute to a progress in degeneracy.

—William Kristol

How to Defeat ISIS

Degradation of ISIS is not the end goal," Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said last week. In what appeared to be a criticism of the Obama White House's ineffective campaign against the Islamic State, the Trump administration's top diplomat insisted, "We must defeat ISIS." At a two-day summit bringing together officials from the 68 countries and international organizations that form the anti-ISIS coalition, Tillerson said that "defeating ISIS is the United States' number one goal in the region."

The Obama administration failed in its efforts to defeat ISIS mainly because it never took on the Shiite expansionism—emanating from Tehran and spreading through the central government in Baghdad to Damascus and Beirut—that has fueled Sunni extremism. Given a choice between the depredations of the Islamic State and those of the Shiite militias backed by Iran, Sunnis caught in the middle have typically chosen to endure the former rather than risk the latter.

The Bush administration came to understand the sectarian roots of the problem. The surge that turned around the U.S.-led war in Iraq was premised on the notion that the only way to get Iraq's Sunni tribes to fight foreign extremists was to tackle the Shiite militias that threatened those tribes. Without moving at the same time against Iran and its allies, urging a Sunni-led campaign against Sunni extremists was tantamount to enjoining that sect to wage war on itself while Iran and its affiliates profited from the intramural carnage.

In its efforts to butter up Iran, the better to seal a deal with Tehran's mullahs, this latter approach is what the Obama White House chose. That is why its anti-ISIS policy failed. Sunnis who might otherwise have resisted ISIS refused to buy in. They saw the U.S. policy, correctly, as pro-Iran.

Worryingly, the Trump administration's ISIS policy appears at this early stage to be stuck in some of the ruts left by its predecessor. Iraq's prime minister Haider al-Abadi visited Washington last week, where he met with President Trump and Secretary Tillerson, who promised a "strategic partnership" to help defeat ISIS. Abadi said that it's important to get local Sunnis on board, but that's going to be very difficult since the Iraqi forces leading the campaign are drawn from mainly Shiite popular mobilization units (PMU), some of which have committed atrocities against the Sunni population. In November the Iraqi parliament recognized these militias as legitimate military forces. Policymakers and analysts

have tried to distinguish between those PMUs that are backed by Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps and those independent of Iranian assistance. But that's an imaginary distinction. The Iraqi interior ministry, which oversees security forces, is led by Qasim Mohammad Jalal al-Araji, who is himself a veteran of Iran's Revolutionary Guards. All of the PMUs are effectively taking orders from the head of the Revolutionary Guard Corps's Quds Force, Qassem Soleimani.

Lebanon's foreign minister Gebran Bassil was also in Washington last week, where he contended that "Lebanon is a natural ally of the United States in its fight against terrorism." By which of course Bassil meant the fight against ISIS and other Sunni groups, not the U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization that controls Lebanon, its army, and government—the Shiite terrorist group Hezbollah. Bassil's father-in-law, Lebanese president Michel Aoun, is a Hezbollah ally who recently said the Lebanese Armed Forces will fight alongside Hezbollah in another war with Israel. In Washington, Bassil reaffirmed Aoun's message and then had the nerve to demand that the United States continue to support the Lebanese Army.

That would be to continue a disastrous policy. As Tony Badran, a research fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, told me, "under the cover of fighting ISIS, the U.S. policy of supporting [the Lebanese Army] has contrib-

uted to Hezbollah's consolidation of its primacy in Lebanon, as well as to the expansion of Hezbollah's strategic interests in Syria. This also has a direct bearing on the future war between Israel and Hezbollah."

Events last week may have shown a glimpse of that future conflict. Israeli jets struck twice in Syrian territory, once against a shipment of game-changing weapons destined for Hezbollah, and then against a Syrian militiaman who dealt with the Iranians. In retaliation, the Syrians fired anti-aircraft rounds that were intercepted by Israel's Arrow-2 system. Had the missiles fallen on civilian or strategically sensitive areas, the resumption of hostilities that Israeli officials have warned of for more than a decade would have been likely.

Secretary Tillerson is right that defeating ISIS should be an American priority and would signal the return of American leadership. However, the battle against the Islamic State is part of a larger regional picture. As Israel's airstrikes showed, our key Middle East ally is defending against the same forces that the Trump administration may be tempted to think are useful partners in the anti-ISIS campaign.

The anti-ISIS campaign cannot succeed without vigilance against Iran and its allies. The Obama administration's realignment with Iran was wrong and dangerous and also deliberate. With equal deliberation, the Trump White House needs to set a new course.

—Lee Smith

Optimism Soars for Midsize Businesses

THOMAS J. DONOHUE
PRESIDENT AND CEO
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Midsize businesses are a critical component of our economy, providing nearly 40 million jobs and 40% of America's GDP. They are yesterday's small businesses and tomorrow's Fortune 500 success stories. To get a better sense of what Washington can do to help them grow, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce partnered with RSM—a leading tax and accounting company—to produce the quarterly *Middle Market Business Index*.

According to the first quarter study released last week, leaders of America's midsize companies reported record-high levels of optimism. They like much of what they've heard from our government leaders, especially regarding tax reform, fixing our health care system, and reducing federal regulations. They see these as enormous opportunities to jolt our economy and grow their businesses. Yet that

optimism comes with a caveat: They're waiting to make investments until Washington proves that it can actually deliver on its promises.

Leaders of middle market companies also see risks and pitfalls ahead on the policy landscape. For example, 27% of respondents identified the renegotiation of existing trade agreements as one of the greatest policy risks their companies face. Misguided changes to agreements, including added restrictions on trade or new costs on imports or exports, could cause significant disruptions to these businesses and their workers.

Another problem identified is the ongoing lack of qualified workers available to fill many open positions. America has millions of people without jobs and millions of jobs without people. Our country can solve both problems by realigning our job training and education systems to ensure that they fit with the needs of American businesses.

It's clear from the *Index* that the 200,000 companies that make up

America's midsize business community are counting on Washington to pursue pro-growth policies. The Chamber is here to help. We've assembled a growth agenda for 2017 consisting of seven policy priorities—provide regulatory relief and reform, harness U.S. energy, modernize our infrastructure, overhaul our tax code, expand American trade, foster a competitive workforce, and reform America's legal system—and we're actively pursuing them with the administration and Congress.

These policies will help every company and every worker, family, and community in America by promoting dynamic economic growth. As the *Index* shows, thousands of midsize businesses are optimistic that these goals can be achieved—but they are waiting for Washington to deliver the goods. Learn more about the *Middle Market Business Index* at uschamber.com/mmbi.



Learn more at
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Sand in the Gears

The caucus that says no.

BY FRED BARNES

Before Republicans captured Washington, the unyielding conservatives in the House Freedom Caucus were a nuisance. Now, with the GOP in control of the House, Senate, and White House, they're a roadblock to success.

There's a simple reason for this: They insist on what cannot be achieved. Anything short of that, such as the bill to repeal and replace Obamacare, triggers fierce opposition by the group's thirty or so members. And if they stick together, they can prevent Republican legislation from passing, as they did at least initially in the case of killing Obamacare.

That's not all. The Freedom Caucus specializes in making things difficult for House speaker Paul Ryan. Its members treat this as a duty. They regard him as a member in good standing of the political establishment who's been Washingtonized and is no longer a legitimate conservative.

It would hardly displease the caucus if some distance emerged between Ryan and President Trump, the wider the gap, the better. The Ryan-Trump relationship, nonexistent during last year's campaign, improved once they began working together on a daily basis to promote the agenda they share. But it's still brittle.

Which brings us to the American Health Care Act (AHCA), the measure to repeal and replace Obamacare that was drafted by Ryan and congressional leaders. The fact that it would eliminate most but not all of Obamacare is

the source of the clash between Ryan and the Freedom Caucus.

The AHCA is designed to circumvent a Democratic filibuster in the Senate. That means it can sweep away only the parts of Obamacare dealing with spending and taxes. The broad frame-



Chairman of the House Freedom Caucus Mark Meadows of North Carolina speaks with the media, March 23.

work of Obamacare would remain. By invoking a procedure known as "reconciliation," the measure can pass by a simple majority—51 votes—with no filibuster allowed.

It's a tedious and unexciting process that requires careful attention to something called the Byrd Rule, which is too arcane to explain. However, it has one advantage: It provides a path to Senate passage and the end of Obamacare. Indeed, it's the only path.

Selling this to House Republicans is no easy task. Ryan could argue that the AHCA must be passed to meet the rules of the Senate. But appeasing big-shot senators is the last thing mere congressmen want to hear. Ryan hasn't made that pitch in public.

But the other arguments for the bill aren't much more compelling. Trump tried what has been dubbed

the Tony Soprano approach when he spoke to the House GOP conference. He insinuated dissenters would be dealt with harshly, perhaps by his backing of primary challengers to those who vote no. This didn't produce a slew of converts.

The president singled out the leader of the Freedom Caucus, Mark Meadows of North Carolina, and asked him to stand. "Oh, I'm gonna come after you," Trump said. A readout from the event said, "Everyone laughed." It didn't note whether Meadows did.

When Freedom Caucus members came to the White House, Trump adviser Steve Bannon was quoted as offering this argument: "You all have to vote for this. We've got to do this. I know you don't like it, but you have to vote for this." His appeal didn't work either.

The problem with the caucus members is not their conservative views. They tend to be ideological purists. The trouble comes from their insistence on ignoring political reality.

They want Obamacare to be repealed in one swoop, the whole program, including the expansion of Medicaid. But that has zero chance of beating a filibuster and gaining Senate approval. Nor would it slip through reconciliation. It's a non-starter, a path to nowhere, a dead end.

Yet the Freedom Caucus sticks with it as tenaciously as Democrats are glued to Obamacare itself. And they have attracted the support of important elements of the conservative hierarchy: the Koch brothers, Americans for Prosperity, the Club for Growth, Heritage Action, FreedomWorks, and Republican senators Mike Lee and Rand Paul. Caucus members report that calls to their offices are lopsidedly against the Ryan-Trump plan.

They deserve credit for focusing on an overlooked aspect of that plan. While it would get rid of the mandate requiring everyone to buy health

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

ALEX BRANNON / AP

insurance, it would not dispose of the package of “essential health benefits.” Those consist of services every insurance policy must provide, including maternity and mental health care.

In talks at the White House, Trump agreed to get rid of this provision. But there’s a rub. It may not qualify under reconciliation, which suggests it’s probably a lost cause in the Senate.

In one sense, the Freedom Caucus has the upper hand over Trump and Ryan. Most of the members are in safely Republican districts and unlikely to be threatened by a primary opponent—that is, unless Trump drops in to campaign against them.

Trump has bigger things to worry about. Republicans have billed him as “the closer,” the fellow who knows how to negotiate and impose a deal. That turns out to be harder than Trump could have anticipated.

Were he to fail on his paramount issue, the president would suffer politically and practically. He would become less of a commanding figure, and progress toward enacting tax reform, infrastructure spending, trade deals, and immigration reform would be slowed. House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi is already calling him “not ready” for the presidency.

Ryan, too, stands to suffer. Caucus Republicans are less afraid of him than they are of Trump. And these conservatives would be delighted to force him to step down. It would be a mistake, but they are adept at making mistakes.

And then there’s the Republican party. It’s been clamoring for repeal of Obamacare from the day it became law in 2010. Unpopular from the start, the health care law delivered the Republican takeover of the House in that year’s midterm election and was crucial to winning control of the Senate in the 2014 midterm.

Start over? It’s too late to devise a new formula for repeal and replace and it would be embarrassing to try. If Republicans don’t get it done in 2017, they may lose the House and possibly the Senate next year. In that case, the Freedom Caucus will have a lot to answer for. ♦

The Cartel That Failed

OPEC is caught between shale and a hard place.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

Saudis, Russia, shale. That is all ye need to know in order to understand the oil market. The Saudis lead the OPEC oil cartel, Russia is their largest potential fellow traveler, and the Permian Basin in the Southwest is the oil-rich shale that stands between the other two and \$100 per barrel oil.

There was a time when the Saudi-led cartel of 13 oil producers could more or less control the price of oil. If the market got so high as to encourage the development of alternatives to oil, the Saudis would open the taps and increase production to bring prices down. If prices fell to unacceptable levels, Saudi Arabia and its partners would agree to production cutbacks, and stabilize or boost prices. Russia would or would not cooperate, depending on its need for cash.

A funny thing happened on the way to continued dominance. A new technology known as fracking gave U.S. producers access to vast reserves embedded in shale formations, largely in the Permian Basin, which sprawls across the western part of Texas and the southeastern part of New Mexico. The Saudis decided to consign the frackers to the scrap heap of history by opening their valves, flooding markets with oil, driving prices so low that the frackers would go bust. It worked. For a while. Prices, once at \$100 per barrel, fell to \$25. Then a second funny thing happened. And a third.



The Saudi regime found that it was running out of cash with which to finance the elaborate welfare state that keeps its people sullen but not mutinous and supports the lifestyles of some 5,000 princes. Then frackers upped their technological game and drove their costs down to a point where they didn’t need \$100 oil to survive, but could make a decent profit at \$40 per barrel or far less.

The combination of these developments led the Saudis to abandon efforts to drive American producers from world markets and to persuade OPEC members to join them in curtailing supply. Better still from OPEC’s point of view, some dozen non-OPEC members, led by Russia, agreed to cooperate by cutting their own output. The cartel and its fellow travelers decided to reduce output by 1.8 million barrels per day, with the nonmembers taking the burden of a 600,000-barrel-per-day cut. And prices did rise to over \$50 per barrel, not the \$100 of the good old days, but twice the \$25 of the bad old days.

But pledges to cut production and actual production cuts are two different things. In the event, OPEC members, most notably Iraq, exceeded their quotas by so much that the Saudis had to reduce daily output by 300,000 barrels more than the 800,000 they had promised in order to keep total OPEC production roughly in line with the cartel’s target. And Khalid Al-Falih, the man in charge of Saudi oil matters, was shocked, shocked to learn that Russia was reducing its output by only one-third of the amount it had pledged. Reports from a recent industry meeting in Houston say Falih “expressed his

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frustration" with Russia and Iraq; "he was really fed up."

Add U.S. output, about which more in a moment, to the flow of oil hitting the market, and prices fell below \$50 a few weeks ago and have remained there. This distressed the Saudis, who need \$50 oil if they are to accomplish three objectives: support the royals in the manner to which they are accustomed; keep their young people passably contented; and maximize the value of their planned initial public offering of a portion of Saudi Aramco.

First, the royals. When the price broke below \$50, King Salman was touring Asia. According to an industry database maintained by Rystad Energy UCube, the average cash cost of producing a barrel of oil in Saudi Arabia is less than \$10, so the king felt no need to curb his desire for company, his need for a bit of excess baggage, and his preference for an aircraft in which he can stretch his legs. He did not panic. No one from his entourage of 1,500, which included 25 royal princes, was sent home. Excess baggage charges for the 505 tons of luggage he was toting were borne manfully. After all, this is a man whose predecessor reportedly spent \$100 million in Marbella on his seven-week vacation to cover the cost of his 3,000-person entourage, a fleet of jumbo jets, 100 new Mercedes transported from Germany, and sundry other necessities.

Second, the young Saudis. Although \$50 oil is sufficient to enable the royals to maintain their living standard, it is the bare minimum needed to continue to anesthetize the unemployed young Saudis with government benefits: About half of the native population of 33 million is under the age of 25. Most young men and, of course, women have never worked, are not trained for jobs, and anyhow prefer government handouts. One who had taken a private-sector job told the *New York Times*, "It is good experience," but

"the days are long and you can't even go out to smoke."

Third, the impending IPO. The Saudis would not like to be peddling shares in the midst of a price war. They want a stable price in the area of \$50 (higher would be better) to support the proposed initial public offering of a 5 percent stake in state-owned Saudi Aramco, an enterprise they expect



The interior of Saudi prince Alwaleed bin Talal's private Boeing 747

the market to value at \$2 trillion.

In short, the price of oil is not a mere price for the Saudis. It is the determinant of the long-run survival of the current regime: its ability to prevent its young from attempting to shake off the social restrictions imposed by the theocracy; its ability to keep the over eight million foreign workers in the country sufficiently satisfied and controlled not to join radical groups; its ability to finance its economic development plan to reduce its dependence on oil revenues; and, of course, its ability to continue financing the spread of the fanatical version of Islam on which ISIS relies for such legitimacy as it has.

Which is why the Saudis tried to stamp out our fracking industry. And now probably wish they hadn't. For by driving prices down to \$25 they forced American oilmen to take a cleaver to costs. Scott Sheffield, CEO of Pioneer Natural Resources, known as "King of the Permian Basin," reckons he can earn a 15 percent return with oil selling at "sub-\$30" per barrel.

And it is oil with two key

characteristics. First, there is a lot of it. Estimates of the total amount and of the portion that is economically recoverable vary widely, but for our purposes we need only note that there is enough oil in various shale formations to keep a lid on prices for a very long time. Second, for technological reasons too complicated to describe here, shale oil production can

be switched on and off with relative ease. Prices drop, shut down high-cost wells; prices rise, bring them back online and drill new ones. When prices rose from their \$25 floor, U.S. output rose by 600,000 barrels per day, offsetting one-third of the planned Saudi-led cut. "Nobody was expecting U.S. shale oil production to pick up so much and so quickly," said Gnanasekar Thiagarajan, director of Commtrendz Risk Management. And exports of U.S. crude, never much

of a factor in the past, are now running at over 1 million barrels per day.

In short, the OPEC cartel can no longer control the price of oil to the extent it once did. The Saudis are now pondering whether to extend the cutbacks when OPEC meets in May. Iran, an OPEC member that was not asked to cut output, not surprisingly wants other members to hold the line on production. They probably will. But in the end these reductions in the oil they put on the market might not be enough to maintain prices at or even near the \$50 level. Of course, with a production cost of under \$10 the Saudis can squeak by even at \$30. But squeaking by might not be enough to prevent the royal family from being forced to move its home to London's swank hotels, as the fleeing Kuwaiti royals did when their country fell to Saddam Hussein. George Herbert Walker Bush returned them to the throne; Donald John Trump is unlikely to be as willing to make the Saudi royal family great again if it falls on hard times. ♦

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The Future of Yesterday's Fuel

The truth about coal's prospects might surprise (and scare) you. **BY BRIAN H. POTTS**

A large swath of the population—mostly on the left—thinks the American coal industry is dead or dying. But another large portion of the population—mostly on the right—thinks the coal industry is primed for a comeback.

Neither group is correct. The coal industry isn't going anywhere any time soon; but it will almost certainly continue to contract for the foreseeable future (regardless of President Trump's rhetoric or policy shifts). The reason isn't stringent environmental regulations—it's low natural gas prices, which make that fuel a lot cheaper to burn than coal.

While less-expensive energy is usually a good thing, this trend is worrisome. Not because of lost coal jobs (which can be replaced) or because coal is the workhorse of our economy (that title that now belongs to natural gas); it's scary because coal's decline could end up throwing the country into a recession or even a Great Depression, while simultaneously putting our nation's security at risk.

Let me explain.

It is unknown exactly when humans discovered that coal could burn. We do know that the Chinese burned coal for fuel in about 1,000 B.C. and Welsh Bronze Age cultures used coal for

funeral pyres. The Bible references coal, as do the writings of Aristotle, Nicander, and Theophrastus. So coal, which is a black or dark brown rock made up of carbonized plant matter, has been a fuel for



The J.R. Whiting coal-fired generating plant in Luna Pier, Michigan, which closed on April 15, 2016, after operating for 64 years

thousands of years. And unless someone discovers an amazing, new, cheap fuel at some point in the future, coal's use worldwide is likely to continue for the next thousand years too (assuming humans still inhabit the Earth by then). Coal is cheap. Coal is packed with energy. And coal is relatively easy to transport.

Between 1971 (when the International Energy Agency started keeping records) and 2014, worldwide coal production steadily increased. In 2014 and 2015, however, worldwide coal production declined, and somewhat steeply.

Nowhere was this drop in coal's use more visible than in the U.S. electric sector. Generating electricity takes a lot of energy, and coal has been the

sector's go-to fuel since electricity was invented. Not anymore. Now that distinction falls to natural gas.

As a fuel, natural gas has always had some disadvantages compared with coal. It's harder to transport (natural gas requires pipelines to get it from point A to point B, while coal can be transported via truck or rail car). Natural gas is much more difficult to store (you can store coal in a pile, whereas natural gas is generally only stored in large, naturally formed underground reservoirs). And natural gas prices have historically been much more volatile than coal prices.

But the advent of hydraulic fracturing has changed everything. The low price of natural gas in the United States has negated these disadvantages.

Of course, from a purely environmental standpoint, this is a wonderful occurrence: Natural gas burns more cleanly than coal and emits less carbon dioxide per unit of energy.

Why burn a dirty rock when you can burn a clear, odorless gas instead?

Which is exactly why the growing use of natural gas has, especially in the last few years, started causing utilities around the country to begin shuttering their aging coal-fired electric plants.

Natural gas is cheaper and many smart economists say it will continue to be cheap for years to come.

This all sounds like a win-win, except for one little problem: We aren't building any new coal plants to replace the ones we're closing. Coal-fired power plants now comprise about 25 percent of all electric generators, down from about a third of all such generators in 2005. They've been replaced mostly by new wind power plants and, to a lesser extent, by natural-gas-fired power plants. Nobody has built a new coal plant in nearly a decade and nobody is expecting one to be built any time soon.

Why is this a problem? There are only four types of power plants that

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TOM HAWLEY / THE MONROE NEWS / AP

can be consistently relied upon to generate baseload power (i.e., the power we need available at all times): coal, natural gas, nuclear, and hydroelectric. Like our coal plant fleet, our nuclear fleet is slowly declining (or at a minimum, staying flat). Our fleet of hydroelectric dams has remained relatively stable for decades. And renewables are intermittent.

As a percentage of total electric plant capacity, natural gas is at its highest point ever, while coal is at its lowest point and still slowly declining. The U.S. Energy Information Agency projects coal power plants to be only 23 percent of the total U.S. electric generating capacity by 2020, with nuclear and hydroelectric plant capacity staying about the same.

Soon we will reach a tipping point, if we haven't already, and our entire economy will be beholden to natural gas as a fuel. In other words, if you took the natural gas fleet of power plants away (or it became too expensive to operate), the grid would go down because coal, nuclear, and hydroelectric plants could no longer shoulder the load alone. A complete reliance on natural gas could be disastrous. What if natural gas prices unexpectedly rise or we have disruptions in supply (say a few pipelines are out of service because of a terrorist attack)?

As a society, we love to build first in response to market signals or new technology without necessarily thinking through the potential ramifications. Yet historically we've always been careful to ensure our fleet of power plants is adequately diverse. Now, because of the fracking boom and coal's environmental concerns, we are steadily headed down the path to an economy tied to just one fuel: natural gas.

Before we get too far ahead of ourselves, policymakers around the country should step back and make sure the short-term economic benefits associated with low-cost natural gas are really worth these potential long-term risks. Cheap natural gas is great right now, but it might not last forever. And if it doesn't, we could all end up in the dark—or worse. ♦

Untapped Revenue

Another reason to drill.

BY STEPHEN MOORE & JACKSON COLEMAN

One of President Donald Trump's most urgent policy priorities is to cut taxes for businesses and workers. It's a promise that Republicans must fulfill if they want to restore American prosperity. But the tax plan—which one of us, Moore, helped write—has a \$2 trillion to \$4 trillion revenue shortfall



atop the biggest trove of recoverable energy of any nation in the world.

After carefully reviewing the best geological surveys, both from government and from private research groups such as the RAND Corporation, we estimate that by expanding energy development on federal lands the government could raise as much as \$3 trillion in royalties, leases, and taxes over the next 25 years. That revenue would help reduce the budget deficit, pay for tax reform, and finance the infrastructure improvements that both parties say they support.

A pro-drilling energy strategy could also raise GDP by \$150 billion a year and reduce the U.S. trade deficit sharply. The \$200 billion Americans spend each year on imported oil could be cut to near zero within five years. The Institute for Energy Research estimates that as many as six million new trucking, welding, pipefitting, engineering, and construction jobs could be created. Most of these would be union jobs, and many would pay \$60,000 to \$100,000 a year. That would be more jobs than the entire employed workforce in Michigan and Ohio, combined.

It is hard to imagine any competing national policies that could deliver anything like this kind of economic dividend while also delivering badly needed government revenues.

Skeptics say this is pie in the sky. But think about what has happened already with American energy production thanks to the shale oil and gas revolution. From 2008-2015, oil and gas output shot up 75 percent. Thanks to game-changing drilling technologies including hydraulic fracturing, advanced mining techniques, horizontal drilling, seismic imaging, and CO₂-enhanced recovery, America could, for decades to come, be the



Look! A debt-relief plan.

over the next 10 years. Faster job and GDP growth, both spurred by those tax cuts, will help halve that gap. But where will the rest of the revenue come from to make sure the GOP doesn't blow an even bigger hole in the budget deficit? That's an issue Republicans aren't even close to resolving.

One idea that some in the Trump White House have floated, import tariffs, would be profoundly unwise. But there is another revenue jackpot to be tapped, one right below us—our vast energy resources. Thanks to the technological revolution that has made shale oil and gas a readily available asset, the United States is now sitting

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FAMARTIN

world's largest supplier of oil and gas.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the U.S. Geological Survey, and think tanks such as RAND, the resources in states including Alaska, California, Colorado, Texas, and Utah, as well as under the outer continental shelf could hold, altogether, more than 1.5 trillion barrels of oil and some 3 quadrillion cubic feet of natural gas. This is at least 50 times annual U.S. consumption.

Many drilling projects are ready to go immediately. The president simply needs to issue the permits. This would be a direct reversal of Barack Obama's actions that, by the stroke of a pen, curtailed drilling on federal lands. In his final weeks in office, Obama signed an order barring offshore oil and gas drilling in huge regions of the Arctic and Atlantic oceans. That last edict alone could deprive the United States of an estimated 27 billion barrels of domestic oil and tens of trillions of cubic feet of natural gas.

Just to be clear: We are not talking about drilling in Yosemite or Yellowstone or, as President Obama once joked, next to the Washington Monument. Drilling would happen in areas not environmentally sensitive.

How much is it all worth? Using the Energy Information Administration's most recent estimates, and assuming that oil prices migrate back to about \$100 a barrel over the next 20 years, the total value of oil and natural gas on federal lands and in U.S. waters is at least \$50 trillion, according to a study from the Committee to Unleash Prosperity.

This output from drilling would bring into the federal treasury \$1.5 trillion from oil and gas royalties charged to oil drillers and another \$1.7 trillion in direct federal income taxes from energy producers and their workers. Lease payments would raise nearly \$40 billion, bringing total revenues to more than \$3 trillion over 25 years.

Our estimate is similar to an analysis performed in 2015 by the Institute for Energy Research, which found that over the next 37 years, the oil and gas on federal lands could generate \$4 trillion in federal revenues.

No tax increase could raise anywhere

near that kind of money without seriously impairing the economy.

The "fiscal dividend" from drilling has worked in places to reduce taxes. Norway gets a huge percentage of its revenues from oil drilling. Alaska doesn't impose a state income or sales tax because of the billions of dollars the state government receives from drilling.

It is true that oil prices are low (about \$50 a barrel, down from \$105 two years ago) and new drilling has slowed dramatically. But oil markets have always gone through busts and booms. As fast-developing nations such as China and India grow richer, demand for oil is likely to surge in the future.

More importantly, drilling technologies keep getting better and better: Frackers are discovering ways to make money even at prices below \$40 a barrel.

The Obama administration's anti-fossil-fuels policies created roadblocks to drilling and to energy infrastructure projects, such as new pipelines.

About 90 percent of shale oil and gas drilling over the past decade has been on private lands because of Obama's obsession with climate change and his desire to end fossil fuel development.

The only argument in favor of those policies would be concern over climate change. But as shale oil and gas production have gone up, greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants have gone down, thanks to the surge in natural gas as a clean, cheap, and reliable source of electricity. Still, it would make sense to dedicate a share of the trillions of dollars of revenue gains from drilling on federal lands to discovering ways to reduce the impact of carbon in the atmosphere, through innovations such as carbon recapture.

An energy policy can be designed in a way that helps pay for tax cuts, expands high-paying jobs, fuels growth, and protects the environment. If the president and Congress seize this \$3 trillion opportunity to make America energy independent, it could be one of their greatest legacies. ♦

A Debt to Posterity

The moral case for spending restraint.

BY JAY COST

Earlier this month, the Trump White House unveiled its budget blueprint, which shifts federal spending priorities from domestic programs to national defense. The Office of Management and Budget proposed cuts of \$54 billion to departments like Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, and Commerce, coupled with big increases for the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security. The only domestic department to see any kind of increase would be Veterans Affairs.

The document was met with gnashing of teeth and rending of garments

by liberals. Nicholas Kristof of the *New York Times* tweeted, "Reading through the Trump budget, I feel as the Romans must have felt in 456 A.D. as the barbarians conquered and ushered in the dark ages."

The Trump budget calls for spending levels that are strikingly similar to those proposed by President George W. Bush in his last budget, submitted in 2008 for fiscal year 2009. Trump wants to fund some domestic agencies at a slightly higher level and others at a lower level, but there is little variation either way. As far as I can recall, the barbarians were not storming the gates in 2008. Moreover, this is discretionary spending, meaning that programs like Medicare and Social Security are not

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at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.*

included. Peel back the hyperbole, and what you see are cuts to domestic programs, but hardly catastrophic ones.

More broadly, if we are going to evaluate the federal budget on a moral level, we have to reckon with the fact that the distribution of benefits is deeply contrary to the principles of republican government. Current generations are, in effect, enriching themselves at the expense of future generations, which goes against the ideals embodied in the Constitution. Democrats and Republicans are both complicit in this state of affairs.

In January, the Congressional Budget Office predicted that the budget deficit for this fiscal year would be \$559 billion, or 2.9 percent of gross domestic product. This means the government will borrow \$559 billion, to be paid back with interest by future generations.

Many of our Founding Fathers would look askance at such profligacy. The issue of the public debt was a hot topic in the early days of the republic, and they wrote extensively on it. Alexander Hamilton probably had the greatest tolerance of debt relative to the other Founders. In the *Report on Public Credit*, Hamilton argues that “the proper funding of the present debt, will render it a national blessing.” What he meant was that if people had faith that the debt would be repaid, then public certificates could function as a form of currency. However, Hamilton warned in the same report that recognizing the utility of the debt was a “position inviting to prodigality, and liable to dangerous abuse.” As such, he suggested that revenues from the post office serve as the basis for a “sinking fund,” to provide “the means of extinguishment” for the debt.

Thomas Jefferson took the hardest line on public debts. In a 1789 letter to James Madison, he wrote that because “the earth belongs in usufruct to the living . . . the dead have neither powers nor rights over it.” Jefferson thought this limitation bound not only individuals, but whole generations. No generation has a natural

right to “contract debts greater than may be paid during the course of its own existence,” in Jefferson’s view, for doing otherwise would unjustly burden the next generation.

Madison responded to Jefferson that there had to be exceptions to this rule—for “improvements made by the dead form a charge against the living who take the benefit of them.” In Madison’s view, “debts may be incurred for purposes which interest the unborn, as well as the living.” Included among these are “debts for



repelling a conquest, the evils of which descend through many generations.” In general, Madison thought that “equity” and “mutual good” required that the debits against the living should not be exceeded by contributions made by the dead.

Madison’s views on the debt shifted over the years, but the opinion he expressed to Jefferson in this letter is consistent with the preamble to the Constitution, which explicitly demarcates future generations as part of civil society. One purpose of our governing charter is “to secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.” Debts that are imposed upon the next generation should be incurred for the purpose of securing the blessings of liberty to them. To this, we may add that because future generations will likely be better off than current ones, it is admissible to incur debts to

ameliorate the burdens faced by citizens on the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum, provided that such efforts are not wasteful.

By this standard, our federal budget is a reprehensible failure. No doubt, the federal government does plenty of things that interest future generations, but this explains at most a fraction of our annual shortfall. The preponderance of our deficit is due to purely political considerations. Namely, it is easier for politicians to win reelection if they distribute government benefits to voters that are in excess of tax burdens. The gap can safely be pushed off to future generations because they are not yet eligible to vote.

Put another way, it is not like the United States could not close this year’s \$559 billion deficit. It chooses not to because doing so is *inconvenient*. Some combination of tax increases and spending cuts could be implemented to fill the hole, but that would invariably offend some essential political constituency, who would rebuke elected officials in the next election. It is much easier to shift the burden to those who will not begin voting until current officeholders are long gone.

Does this mean the government has a moral obligation to balance the budget? No. Deficits can have positive economic effects in certain circumstances. But there is an obligation to govern for the general welfare, broadly conceived to include a regard for future generations. That means keeping deficits relatively under control, either by cutting wasteful spending or increasing taxes to pay for necessary services. Our government simply does not do that.

So as we gear up for yet another debate on the merits of this or that budgetary line item, it is proper to acknowledge our miserable place in the grand scheme of things. Our current fiscal situation runs contrary to the principles upon which our country was founded, and we should not delude ourselves into thinking that one side of the present divide is any better than the other.

◆ THOMAS FLUHARTY

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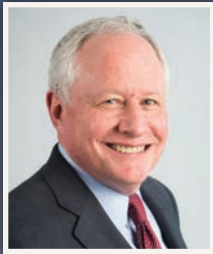
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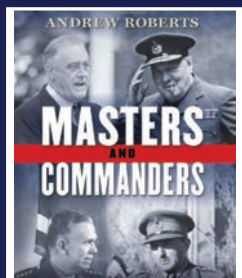
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A Conservative Takes on Climate Change

Jay Faison's lonely crusade

BY STEVEN F. HAYWARD

The contest for loneliest person on the right in Donald Trump's Washington would be hard fought among free traders, pro-immigration libertarians, neoconservative globalists, and fiscal hawks convinced of the necessity of entitlement reform. But none of these could possibly be as lonely as the conservative Republican who believes climate change is a serious threat that his party should make a priority. That person is Jay Faison.



Jay Faison, right, discusses energy priorities with journalist Stephen Stromberg, left, and Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.), center, during the GOP convention in Cleveland, July 19, 2016.

But don't tell Faison that. Despite seeming out of step with the climate skepticism of most conservatives and the Trump administration, this ebullient 49-year-old from Charlotte, North Carolina, brims with optimism and a can-do spirit deriving from his practical experience as a successful entrepreneur. He doesn't feel lonely at all, because the Trump administration is not essential to his long-term strategy, while some of Trump's early moves, such as halting the anti-coal bias of the Obama administration, actually meet with Faison's approval. "Everyone

focuses on the White House," Faison says, "but there are a lot of other things happening that don't depend on the White House. You need to look beyond the headlines."

A conversation with Faison turns the entire matter on its head, revealing that the real sectarian skeptics are the polarizing environmental advocates, like Bill McKibben and Tom Steyer, who insist on imposing a rigid and unrealistic orthodoxy that brooks no deviation or dissent. While the *New York Times* reports that "some political observers have drawn comparisons between Mr. Faison and Tom Steyer," and former South Carolina congressman Bob Inglis has called him "the Tom Steyer of the right on climate change," it would be more accurate to understand Faison as the un-Steyer. Faison is no light greenie. He told me, "Working in the real estate business with my father I saw how crazy environmentalists can be."

Faison does not fit the usual profile of a climate warrior. He is the son of a prosperous North Carolina developer, Henry Faison, and freely admits, "I was born on third base and stole home." After taking an MBA from the University of Virginia and working in the family business, he set out on his own and founded SnapAV, a home electronics equipment wholesaler. He is a regular churchgoer who describes himself as a "nondenominational Christian," adding, "I don't know why anyone thinks belief in the New Testament conflicts with science." Ideologically he describes himself as a "fiscal conservative"; he endorses school choice and tort reform, and dislikes Obamacare as much as the next conservative. He's been a longstanding supporter of Republican candidates, favoring Jeb Bush and Lindsey Graham in the last presidential cycle and directing substantial contributions to the reelection campaigns of senators Rob Portman and Kelly Ayotte, majority leader Mitch McConnell, and congresswoman Elise Stefanik. Asked who his favorite Republican is at the moment, his answer is instant and enthusiastic: "Rob Portman. He understands the details on complex policy issues."

Faison aligns with the "consensus" that climate change

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ERIC HANSON / WASHINGTON POST / GETTY

presents a potentially serious risk to the future of the planet. He became convinced of this risk through a series of encounters with climate scientists and acquired a sense for the vulnerability of ecosystems from being a lifelong outdoorsman. Meanwhile, SnapAV prospered. In 2013, Faison sold his interest in the company and used \$175 million of his proceeds to start a new foundation, ClearPath, dedicated to climate and energy issues.

But Faison took a circuitous route there, as befits someone with the entrepreneurial inclination to look at the political marketplace and “go where other people aren’t.” The biggest problem with climate change is that the environmental community has polarized the issue. Faison notes that it started out with the usual combination of consensus and policy disagreement during the administration of George H.W. Bush, who committed the United States to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, but for which he got no credit from the increasingly partisan environmental community. Today, the leading climate campaigners like McKibben and Steyer seem primarily concerned with demonizing anyone who doesn’t fully profess a narrow environmental confession, in virtually the same sense as a confession of faith, and branding anyone who questions the gaps and defects of the current state of climate prediction with the risible label “denier” or tool of fossil fuel companies. (This turns out to include Faison, as we shall see.) The animus toward dissent extends to hounding unorthodox believers in climate change like the University of Colorado’s Roger Pielke Jr. When Pielke pointed out that the data and findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—the gold standard for the supposed “consensus science” on climate—don’t support the popular claim that severe weather events are becoming more frequent and more extreme, Steyer encouraged the Center for American Progress to mount a smear campaign to get Pielke ousted as a contributor to Nate Silver’s *FiveThirtyEight*. For many environmental advocates, purity of belief is more important than results or incremental compromise, persuasion disdained in favor of denunciation. It is easy to conclude their fervency is less about science and policy than politics, yet environmentalists wonder why they face so much resistance.

Faison’s first effort to influence the hothouse of climate politics was a misfire. Perceiving correctly that any serious, long-term climate policy requires the involvement of Republicans, Faison launched a grassroots social media campaign designed to persuade them to moderate their climate skepticism. (Surveys consistently show Republicans

worry much less about climate change risks than Democrats by a huge margin.) ClearPath’s campaign proved a bust, as Faison freely admits.

“We got it wrong,” Faison said; “we threw a lot of money away.” Ever the entrepreneur, Faison learned a market lesson. “The worst possible thing you can do in business is go against the market. Environmentalists preach to Republicans. No one likes to be preached at. It doesn’t work in business, and it doesn’t work in politics. Climate change has become very tribal, but it’s a long-term issue. The problem with environmentalists is they think people will support pain now for benefits later.” As Faison told Bloomberg News last summer, he got the feeling on Capitol Hill that Republicans thought he was a closet liberal, a Tom Steyer-lite. “When I say ‘climate change,’ they think Nancy Pelosi.”

So Faison switched course, believing that there is an opening in the GOP for what he calls “*conservative* ‘clean energy’ solutions.” This may sound like a tricky proposition, too, but Faison has a clear grasp of how the environmental community has also distorted the domain of “clean energy.” For all of his conventional opinions about climate science, Faison departs markedly from the usual prescriptions of environmentalists for a

forced march to “renewable” energy such as wind and solar. “I am not aware of solar or wind energy projects that are not heavily subsidized,” he notes. “It’s a top-down approach that does little to drive down the cost of clean energy or drive innovation.” Above all, wind and solar can’t scale up very far to meet our energy needs, and the intermittency of wind and solar power will always be a problem. Modern economies must have “affordable power when you need it.”

Though Faison is too generous to say so directly, he acknowledges that environmentalists are more of an obstacle than help in developing low- and non-carbon energy sources on a large enough scale to meet the world’s growing energy needs. “Environmentalists want this to be easy. They don’t want to think about the complexities of energy.” Warming up to the subject, Faison rolls on: “Most environmentalists are not energy experts. They don’t go to coal mines. They don’t talk to energy executives. They show no intellectual humility on the issue.” He thinks the current environmental mania for blocking pipelines and declaring of fossil fuel “leave it in the ground” is counterproductive.

Faison’s new climate policy strategy can be stated succinctly: innovation instead of regulation. Obama’s Clean Power Plan is “not operationally doable,” Faison thinks; the

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state-level mandates of the Clean Air Act on which the CPP is based—designed for very different kinds of conventional air pollution problems—actually prevent much interstate flexibility in meeting low-carbon energy needs. Opposing CPP is only the beginning of Faison’s clean energy heresies. He supports fracking for natural gas, noting that the decline in carbon emissions in the United States owes more to market-driven substitution of cheap natural gas for coal that fracking made possible than to regulatory efforts. He supports vastly expanded nuclear power. He supports increased hydropower, which environmentalists hate more than nuclear power. “Hydropower has been held hostage by the environmental movement.” Last year, Faison teamed up with Alaska senator Lisa Murkowski in a *New York Times* op-ed entitled “Stop Wasting America’s Hydropower Potential,” pointing out that expanding hydropower would not necessarily involve building many new dams: “For instance, only 3 percent of the nation’s 80,000 dams now produce electricity. Electrifying just the 100 top impoundments—primarily locks and dams on the Ohio, Mississippi, Alabama and Arkansas Rivers that are operated by the Army Corps of Engineers—would generate enough electricity for nearly three million more homes.”

Most heterodox of all, Faison says “coal is not a four-letter expletive.” Here Faison understands what environmentalists refuse to acknowledge: “The clean energy game is not in the U.S.; it’s in southeast Asia, where 80 percent of new energy assets are going to be built over the next generation.” And those nations are going to use a lot of coal. Carbon capture from coal has been a tough slog, but Faison is convinced the costs will come down if we stay on it. It will require some government research help and investment, as will a new generation of nuclear power, still struggling to be born in a regulatory framework that hasn’t been updated in 40 years. Faison describes the problem of constructing nuclear this way on his website, ClearPath.org: “Build in America. It would take 10 years and cost around \$500 million, including roughly \$100 million in fees to get it approved by the NRC, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Build in Asia. Get it approved to build in 4 years. Save millions.” No wonder China is leading the world in new nuclear power development.

Energy policy wonks will divide about the capacity and defects of government-led basic research, rightly worrying about rent-seekers capturing government favors, the potential of path dependence, and the hazards of allowing the government to be in a position to “pick winners.” Faison is aware of the problems of government-led innovation—“government could mismanage a two-car parade,” he notes—and embraces some libertarian-leaning ideas such as cash prizes for performance-based energy technology breakthroughs.

But to bog down in these difficulties is to miss a broader point, perhaps best brought to light by asking Faison who his allies are. His first answer: “The coal industry.” Here Faison’s geniality yields to frustration with the environmentalists who cling bitterly to their anti-coal absolutism and their “keep it in the ground” mentality. Faison adds that he’s had productive relations with the Heritage Foundation and even the chief climate skeptic among Capitol Hill Republicans, Sen. James Inhofe. Faison has taken a lot of heat from some on the right for his stance on climate change, but he’s keeping faith with conventional energy producers and conservatives. Nor is he entirely an outlier. Operating more quietly than Faison’s ClearPath Foundation is Samuel Thernstrom’s Energy Innovation Reform Project, which is taking deep dives into energy technology questions. (See “The Next Shale Revolution,” *THE WEEKLY STANDARD*, December 29, 2014.)

Some critical news articles about Faison say he was naïve, if not foolish, for thinking he could change the minds of a significant number of conservatives on climate change. As already mentioned, Faison acknowledges that such a mission proved to be an uphill fight. Tom Steyer has spent much more in the political realm than Faison with abysmal results, while seeming to have learned nothing from his failures. Yet the media still treat him with complete credulity. Steyer, meantime, isn’t even willing to meet Faison halfway. “From what we can tell by the people he is supporting, he is grading Republicans on the curve,” Steyer complained of Faison to the *New York Times*. “We have fairly objective standards for grading people, and none of the [sic] them come close to meeting our standards.” “Objective standards” means complete conformity to Steyer’s inflexible views. But how does Steyer expect to make any political progress if his “objective standards” essentially require Republicans to become Democrats? Who is the real naïf here?

While climate activists like Steyer and McKibben recite the (inaccurate) slogan about how “97 percent of scientists ‘believe’ in climate change,” they shift the subject when it is pointed out that 100 percent of public and private long-term energy forecasts, such as those from the International Energy Agency and our own Department of Energy, find that fossil fuels will be the dominant source of energy for the planet for decades to come, and no amount of solar and wind power worship is going to change that. Who are the real “deniers,” then? With environmentalists becoming increasingly shrill and extreme, as do all coercive utopians detached from reality, Faison’s approach—encouraging innovation around current energy sources like nuclear, coal, and hydropower while seeking new breakthrough energy technologies—may well turn out to be the most farsighted if serious climate disruption comes to pass. ♦

Woodrow Wilson's War

One hundred years later, idealism still isn't enough

BY GEOFFREY NORMAN

On April 2, 1917, Woodrow Wilson became only the fourth president to ask Congress for a declaration of war. The others were James Madison, James K. Polk, and William McKinley. Those three wars cost a total of some 30,000 lives.

Wilson's war would leave more than 115,000 American fighting men dead from hostile fire, disease, and other causes. The only costlier conflicts in the nation's history were World War II (405,399) and the Civil War (750,000). Franklin Roosevelt asked Congress to declare war in 1941, making him the last president to do so, though certainly not the last to preside over a nation at war. The Civil War required no declaration of war. For Lincoln to have requested one would have recognized the enemy as a legitimate government rather than a rebellion.

Even in our "don't know much about history" era, most people could give you the elevator pitch on why the Civil War and World War II were fought and, at the very worst, could come up with good one-word answers. "Slavery" and "Hitler."

For Mr. Wilson's War . . . not so much.

The best-remembered argument made by the man himself was that America was going to war to make the world "safe for democracy." The poignant thing is he seems to have sincerely meant it.

Wilson was, after all, an idealist. Before he ran for governor of New Jersey in 1910, he had been uncorrupted by any political office. He had been a writer of dense and scholarly books, a college professor, and the president of Princeton University. He was an intellectual and a "progressive," and he thought big. His ideas would today be called "disruptive."

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For instance: "All that Progressives ask or desire is permission . . . to interpret the Constitution according to the Darwinian principle."

Nor was he especially fond of the other great founding document, the Declaration of Independence: "No doubt a lot of nonsense has been talked about the inalienable rights of the individual, and a great deal that was mere vague sentiment and pleasing speculation has been put forward as fundamental principle."

He was, then, a believer in the power of the state as long as that power was in the right hands. He was especially fond of the power of the presidency and wrote,



Wilson, left, with wife Edith in his second inaugural parade, March 5, 1917

The President is at liberty, both in law and in conscience, to be as big a man as he can. His capacity will set the limit; and if Congress be overborne by him, it will be no fault of the makers of the Constitution . . . but only because the President has the Nation behind him and Congress has not.

Like his rival Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson came early and fervently to the cult of the president and reverence for the state. His progressive legacy includes the Federal Reserve banking system, the Federal Trade Commission, and the federal income tax, for

which we cannot possibly thank him enough.

He could also bring down the hammer. Once the nation had gone to war to make the world safe for democracy, he signed a sedition law. Under its provisions, people who would today be called "dissidents," or perhaps "the resistance," were arrested and put in jail. These unfortunates included notable political opponents like Eugene Debs, who was the leader of the Socialist party and had run against Wilson in 1912. When the war was over and he could have pardoned Debs, Wilson declined to do so, even though his attorney general favored the pardon. His sentence was commuted by Wilson's successor, Warren Harding, a more charitable man. As H. L. Mencken wrote of Wilson in 1921, "Magnanimity was simply beyond him."

After war was declared, it became illegal for Americans

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to “utter, print, write, or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language” about the government or the military. The postmaster general became an enforcer with power to revoke the mailing privileges of periodicals that got out of line. Some 75 were shut down. Enough, certainly, *pour encourager les autres*.

Wilson’s Department of Justice arrested tens of thousands without just cause. But the attorney general still insisted no citizen need fear. Just “Obey the law. Keep your mouth shut.” The department also formed something called the American Protective League, which encouraged people to inform on their fellow citizens for draft dodging and other seditious behavior.

The Wilson administration established a War Industries Board that was meant to centralize economic planning and decision-making and, in fact, served to validate Randolph Bourne’s famous line “War is the health of the state.” (This side of the Wilson era is detailed mercilessly and, strange to say, *delightfully*, in Jonah Goldberg’s indispensable *Liberal Fascism*.)

The war that the United States was being called upon to fight in order to make the world “safe for democracy” seems to have been a serious threat to democracy in America. So was it a war worth fighting? And, for that matter, did we even win?

When war broke out in Europe, in August 1914, Wilson—who had been president for two years—took the high road. With armies on the march and the greatest, bloodiest battles in history about to be fought, Wilson warned Americans not to let themselves be divided into “camps of hostile opinion, hot against each other.” The country must, he said, “be neutral in fact as well and in name during these times that are to try men’s souls. We must be impartial in thought as well as in action, must put a curb upon our sentiments.”

Easier said than done, of course, in a nation of immigrants. Those who’d come from England and Germany knew exactly whose side they took. And if you weren’t among those whose loyalties were with the Germans then it was hard to deny the brutality of that nation’s invasion of Belgium, during which civilian hostages were rounded up and executed by firing squad as a way to keep the populace terrified and docile. Germany was, from the beginning of the war, the aggressor.

But neutrality was the Wilson cause, even after a German submarine torpedoed the liner *Lusitania* on May 7,

1915. The ship sank in 18 minutes, and of the 1,198 passengers who drowned, 128 were Americans.

It was a provocation but not sufficient to change Wilson’s convictions about neutrality. He declared, in a speech shortly after the sinking, that there is “such a thing as a man being too proud to fight. There is such a thing as a nation being so right that it does not need to convince others by force that it is right.”

Thinking, perhaps, that there was surely a limit to even Wilson’s idealism and patience, Germany’s leaders backed off from their campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare and as John Milton Cooper, a historian of Wilson’s presidency, wrote, “the threat of war was in remission.” Campaigning on the slogan “He kept us out of war,” Wilson was reelected in 1916.

Wilson’s Department of Justice arrested tens of thousands without just cause. But the attorney general still insisted no citizen need fear. Just ‘Obey the law. Keep your mouth shut.’ The department also formed something called the American Protective League, which encouraged people to inform on their fellow citizens for draft dodging and other seditious behavior.

In his second inaugural address, Wilson said of the war, “We have been conscious that we were not part of it. In that consciousness, despite many divisions, we have drawn closer together. We have been deeply wronged upon the seas, but we have not wished to wrong or injure in return; have retained throughout the consciousness of standing in some sort apart, intent upon an interest that transcended the immediate issues of the war itself.”

Our virtue, in short, was our armor. The war, by then, had become unimaginably savage. The French and Germans fought for months at Verdun, where some 700,000 were killed and wounded. Then the fighting moved to the Somme, where the British Army lost 20,000 in the first day of fighting. By the time that battle ended, four months later, there were more than a million casualties, dead and wounded, on both sides. To the normal horrors of combat—shot and shell—had been added the use of poison gas. And there was no end in sight. Some people actually believed the war might never end.

The Royal Navy ruled the seas—the surface of them, anyway. And its blockade threatened to starve Germany. Then Russia quit the fight. The German troops fighting on that front could be sent to fight the French and the British. It was, the Germans believed, an opportunity to win the war in early 1918. So they decided to resume unrestricted submarine warfare and, being punctilious about these things, announced it, more or less, in the press.

This action, the German high command realized, risked bringing the Americans into the war. But if the offensive on the Western Front succeeded—and those reinforcements from the Russian front made that likely, if not certain—American troops wouldn't arrive in time to make a difference.

Besides, there was another plan for dealing with the Americans. This one involved provoking a fight between Mexico and the United States. And for good measure, stirring up trouble between the United States and Japan as well.

The plan was outlined in a cable sent by the German foreign secretary, Arthur Zimmermann, to the German embassy in Mexico City. British cryptographers intercepted and decrypted it, then found a way to release it without compromising their code-breaking operations. The Germans did not even bother to deny the authenticity of the message or back away from it, and there was no diplomatic ambiguity in its wording:

We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. . . . [W]e make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The settlement in detail is left to you. . . . [T]he ruthless employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England in a few months to make peace.

The resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare and the exposure of the Zimmermann telegram in all its effrontery made it impossible, even for Wilson, to believe that neutrality was any longer possible.

So just a month after his second inaugural, having run as the man who “kept us out of war,” he was asking Congress for authority to get in. All in.

There was no naïveté in Wilson about what this meant. A few days before war was declared, he had said to a journalist, “Once lead this people into war and they’ll forget there ever was such a thing as tolerance. To fight, you must be brutal . . . and the spirit of ruthless brutality will enter into the very fiber of our national life, infecting Congress, the courts, the policeman on the beat, the man in the street. Conformity will be the only virtue. And every man who refuses to conform will have to pay the penalty.”

One wonders if he saw his own future in these bleak thoughts. And also how he reconciled those thoughts with that business about making the world “safe for democracy.”

But the flame of idealism still burned hot within him. If democracy and individual freedoms were to take a hit at home, there was still a world to redeem.

The war, however, went on according to its own logic. Parts of the French Army, having been bled white and disastrously and nearly criminally led, mutinied. With France just holding on, the British stubbornly and disastrously attempted their own offensive, in Belgium. It lasted weeks and almost ruined the army. The British were running out of men and, in Winston Churchill's words, sending out “to the shambles by stern laws the remaining manhood of the nation. Lads of 18 and 19, elderly men up to 45, the last surviving brother, the only son of his mother (and she a widow), the father, the sole support of the family, the weak, the consumptive, the thrice wounded—all must now prepare themselves for the scythe.”

If the coming German offensive were to succeed before the Americans arrived in sufficient numbers, then the war would be lost. And it did, in fact, turn out to be a close run thing. But the British held, barely, as did the French, with help from the Americans in, among other battles, the one at Belleau Wood. And then the Allies—with the Americans—attacked and turned back the Germans whose countrymen at home were starving, as they had meant for the British Isles to be starved by the U-boat campaign.

The desperate Germans asked for an armistice to be based on terms drawn up by Wilson, in what he called the Fourteen Points. The first of these famously called for “Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at.” Another asserted, “All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored, and the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine . . . should be righted, in order that peace may once more be made secure in the interest of all.”

German acceptance of this condition was a far cry from its stated aims, put to paper when the war began: “The general aim of the war is security for the German Reich in west and east for all imaginable time. For this purpose France must be so weakened as to make her revival as a great power impossible for all time. Russia must be thrust back as far as possible from Germany's eastern frontier and her domination over the non-Russian vassal peoples broken.” After that, it got tougher.

So the Germans got some of their own when they accepted the harsh terms. It was an armistice, though, and not a surrender. The fighting stopped and the statesmen took over. Wilson went to Europe and played his part in the negotiations that led to the Treaty of Versailles.

The enlightened view of that treaty, spelled out most persuasively and eloquently by John Maynard Keynes in his book *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, was that it was a disaster; that it was harsh and punitive as regards Germany and would lead, inevitably, to another war.

The Germans, unsurprisingly, agreed. They had not surrendered. Merely put down their arms as a way to an

honorable peace. Then they had been “stabbed in the back.”

Wilson, according to this view, had capitulated too easily to David Lloyd George and, especially, Georges Clemenceau, who wanted vengeance for France for all it had suffered at the hands of the Germans, going back to 1870.

According to his critics, Wilson had gone along because he was too weak and too idealistic and believed that whatever the flaws coming out of Versailles, they could be repaired by the proposed League of Nations, a world governing body that would, in the future, settle conflicts between nations bloodlessly and rationally. If the league could be achieved then the war would, indeed, have been fought to end war—something Wilson was supposed to have said. He never did, but he surely could have.

He did say, though, that he hoped to achieve “peace without victory.” It was as if he believed that the war had, in some sense, been a terrible misunderstanding. And that if the warring nations would just sit down and talk and settle their differences like good Christian men, then the world could be made right.

So he went home and tried to persuade the Senate to ratify the treaty that would make the United States a member of the league. In his mind, it was either the league or more war. There was no other way. Reason and idealism were the instruments of peace.

The United States never joined the League of Nations, which proved ineffectual at best, unwilling to stand up even to Mussolini when he invaded Ethiopia. This, it has been argued, was the reason the world slipped back into war. The pressures and stress of his effort to convince the country and the Senate that America needed to be in the league—done in the whistle-stop fashion of a political campaign—brought on the stroke that nearly killed Wilson and made his wife de facto president for the last year he was in office.

So the league failed to prevent—and perhaps even helped to provoke—the next war, which was even worse. But that war, which began a mere 20 years after the end of the “war to end war,” was not a result of America and its allies being too tough. They—and especially Wilson—had been too idealistic, too naïve. Wilson seems to have believed his own high-minded rhetoric and denied the evidence in front of his face.

Germany had been the aggressor nation in 1914. Had invaded Belgium and murdered that country’s citizens for committing war crimes when they resisted. Had imposed ruthlessly tough terms on Russia in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Was ready to ally itself with Mexico in a war with the United States. Whatever it took to win Germany’s place in the sun—that was what the German rulers were willing to do.

Though they were forced to accept harsh terms in the end, they somehow made that into an honorable truce, and the troops were welcomed home almost as victors. The kaiser fled into exile, and when Lloyd George and Clemenceau argued that he should be brought home and tried and possibly executed, Wilson resisted and prevailed. Before long there was agitation in Germany to avenge the Versailles doublecross.

Could there have been a “peace without victory”? One that would have made the world “safe for democracy”? Pretty to think so. But a persuasive case can be made that if Wilson had been more ruthless at any point, the first war might have been won sooner and another one prevented. Only two of America’s wars have been bloodier than Wil-



French premier Georges Clemenceau, left, with Woodrow Wilson, center, and British prime minister David Lloyd George after signing the Treaty of Versailles, June 28, 1919

son’s. Both the Civil War and World War II ended with total defeat and more or less unconditional surrender. And things were settled pretty much once and for all.

After 1945, Japan would never invade Manchuria again. In Europe, when a victorious United States considered the Morgenthau Plan that would have deindustrialized their country, the Germans seemed, at last, to have gotten the message. Today, Germany cannot even be persuaded to spend the 2 percent of GDP on its military that NATO agreements call for.

Wilson, because he was a rationalist and an enlightened man, believed that after the war, what everyone would desire above all was peace. In fact, what more than enough Germans wanted, above all, was revenge.

He was, perhaps, a brilliant man. But too refined to appreciate the wisdom of his countryman William Tecumseh Sherman: War is cruelty. You cannot refine it.

A war to end war, like peace without victory, is an intellectual chimera. The sort of thing idealists find seductive, but not of this world. ♦



Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald on television (1958)

Ella by Starlight

The centennial of the First Lady of Song. BY TED GIOIA

Ella Fitzgerald is the only performer with whom I've ever worked who made me nervous," Frank Sinatra admitted in a 1959 interview. "Because I try to work up to what she does. You know, try to pull myself up to that height—because I believe she is the greatest popular singer in the world, barring none, male or female."

It's hard to imagine the Chairman of the Board finding anyone intimi-

dating back in 1959. Sinatra was at the peak of his career, and when he wasn't starring in Hollywood movies or making hit records, he was hobnobbing with Mafia dons and future presidents, courting starlets, and ruling Las Vegas with the Rat Pack. Could Ella Fitzgerald really unnerve the most popular entertainer in the world?

But Fitzgerald did that to other vocalists. Indeed, she may have dazzled musicians even more than the general public and the ranks of her rapt admirers include a veritable hall of fame of American popular song. "I often told her she was the best singer

I'd ever heard in my life," Tony Bennett recalls in his autobiography. "Man, woman or child, Ella is the greatest of them all," Bing Crosby once admitted. "She was the greatest singer on the planet," acknowledged Mel Tormé.

But my favorite reviews of her music came from the songwriters. Cole Porter, a man not easily impressed, and typically blasé about what jazz performers did to his work, exclaimed in response to Fitzgerald's recording of his music: "My, what marvelous *diction* that girl has." Ira Gershwin, upon hearing her interpretations, pronounced: "I didn't

Ted Gioia writes on music, literature, and popular culture and is the author, most recently, of How to Listen to Jazz.

ABC PHOTO ARCHIVES / GETTY IMAGES

realize our songs were so good until Ella sang them.”

This year marks the centenary of Ella Fitzgerald’s birth (April 25, 1917), and I’m curious to see whether the occasion will bring her music to the attention of new millennial listeners. After all, Fitzgerald’s commercial value, although considerable, never quite matched her artistic reputation: The last time she had a single on the *Billboard* chart was 1969—when “Get Ready” peaked at spot 126 the same week the Beatles’ *Abbey Road* was the bestselling album—and Ella’s last number-one single was during World War II. For millennials, that’s almost as ancient as the Battle of Marathon. Even for my generation of aging baby boomers, Fitzgerald may be better known for a television commercial touting Memorex cassette tapes than for her jazz recordings.

That said, a dose of Ella Fitzgerald might be just what the music industry needs in the year 2017. In fact, she represents the antithesis of all the worst excesses and vices of the current scene. No popular singer of the 20th century ever had less need of Auto-Tune and the other digital trickery of today’s recordings. She set the gold standard for intonation, and her pitches were as true as a Bob Feller fastball. Nor did she need to borrow samples and snippets from other recordings. When you sing at that level, who would you possibly want to borrow from? And she never used the F-word or N-word in a song, even when seemingly scatting out every other possible combination of vowels and consonants in her uninhibited vocal improvisations.

But Fitzgerald differs most from today’s pop divas in the sweet innocence that she brought to her delivery of a love song. She never tried to sell herself on sex appeal. Even within the context of the primmest attitudes of her era, Ella downplayed eroticism—you were advised to check out Billie Holiday or Bessie Smith if you were looking for saucy fare of that sort. But you never missed it when you heard

Fitzgerald sing. What she lacked in sexual innuendo she more than made up for in the potent emotional longing of her music. If Bessie Smith got you thinking about a steamy affair, Ella Fitzgerald reminded you of what it’s like to fall in love. I’ll leave it up to you to judge which is the more powerful and lasting experience, whether in real life or just its radio soundtrack.

You might conclude that Ella Fitzgerald is hopelessly out-of-date in an age of twerking teen divas and sampling DJs. But I wouldn’t count out the First Lady of Song (as her admirers



Chick Webb, Ella Fitzgerald (1938)

nicknamed her). Fitzgerald built her whole career on defying the odds and coming out on top.

She launched her career entertaining for tips on the streets of Harlem, but got her big break when she wowed the audience at a 1934 talent contest at the Apollo Theater. A few weeks later she took over the coveted spot as featured vocalist with the Chick Webb Orchestra, one of the hottest jazz bands of the era.

In this new role, opportunity and tragedy struck in quick succession. First came a huge success when, in June 1938, Fitzgerald enjoyed the biggest hit of her career. The Webb band’s recording of “A-Tisket, A-Tasket” was a number-one hit and remained the bestselling record in America for almost three months. Back then, music writers didn’t anoint tunes as “the song of the summer” the

way they do nowadays, but if they had, this unlikely swing band number—based on a children’s nursery rhyme from the 19th century—would have been the consensus choice.

But Fitzgerald’s boss Chick Webb was already struggling with the effects of the tuberculosis that would lead to his death on June 16, 1939, almost exactly one year after the release of “A-Tisket, A-Tasket.” If he had lived, Webb would have made his mark as one of the leading stars of the World War II era. And deservedly so—in my opinion, he was the finest jazz drummer of his generation. But after his death at Johns Hopkins, from complications of surgery, the survival of his band was in question. Could it continue without its star attraction?

At this juncture, Ella Fitzgerald, who had just turned 22, stepped in as the new leader of the band. Under her stewardship, the hits kept coming—“Imagination,” “I Want the Waiter,” “Five O’Clock Whistle”—although none matched the success of “A-Tisket, A-Tasket.” But Fitzgerald was ambitious and wanted more. In 1942, she left bandleading behind to pursue a career as a solo artist and started to gain renown more

for her virtuosic wordless vocals—known in the jazz world as scat singing—instead of novelty tunes and romantic ballads. Her recordings of “Flying Home” (1945) and “Oh, Lady Be Good!” (1947) captivated listeners with their free-flowing invention and laid the foundation for Ella’s shift from swing-band singer to modern jazz diva.

Even so, Ella Fitzgerald faced numerous challenges in the 1950s. Her marriage to bassist Ray Brown broke up in 1953. In 1954, she was hospitalized with a node on her vocal cords that threatened to end her career. She was pursued by the Internal Revenue Service for unpaid tax bills. But her biggest challenge was simply maintaining superstar status in a musical culture that was abandoning jazz for rock ‘n’ roll. In this new environment, even the hottest

vocalists of the 1930s and '40s struggled to hold on to their audience.

At this perilous juncture, Ella embarked on the most ambitious project of her career. Under the direction of Norman Granz, a jazz impresario who was now both her manager and record producer, Fitzgerald once again aimed to redefine her image, downplaying her bebop pyrotechnics and setting herself up, instead, as the champion of the classic American popular songs.

"I had gotten to the point where I was only singing be-bop," she later explained.

I thought be-bop was "it," and that all I had to do was go someplace and sing bop. But it finally got to the point where I had no place to sing. I realized then that there was more to music than bop. Norman [Granz] came along, and he felt that I should do other things, so he produced *The Cole Porter Songbook* with me. It was a turning point in my life.

The Cole Porter project, from 1956, set the pattern for most of the next decade. Fitzgerald released a series of now-classic albums devoted to the finest songwriters of the 20th century: George and Ira Gershwin, Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, Irving Berlin, Duke Ellington, Harold Arlen, Jerome Kern, and Johnny Mercer. By the time she was finished, she had recorded 15 hours of music and set a standard of excellence no interpreter of the American popular song has surpassed in the intervening half-century.

There are many reasons why Ella Fitzgerald still warrants our love and respect 100 years after her birth, but these works belong at the top of the list. I admire many of her other recordings: Her collaborations with Louis Armstrong, her live albums in Berlin and Rome, and her late career projects with Joe Pass are some of my most cherished jazz albums. But the *Songbooks* transcend jazz. In elevating herself, she also celebrated the worthiest of song composers and created a timeless document of the greatest popular music of her lifetime. I can't imagine this music ever losing its allure—not now, not tomorrow, nor even in another 100 years. ♦

B&A

Teaching by Numbers

Is there a better way to learn how the world works?

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

This is a revolt of the masses, in this case masses of economic students from around the world who came of age during the 2008 financial crisis and have united in a movement they call Rethinking Economics. The leaders of the movement, which according to the *Guardian* has grown to 43 student campaigns across 15 countries, including the United States, were studying economics at the University of Manchester when the 2008 crisis almost brought the entire international financial system down. As the authors write:

While we were memorising and regurgitating abstract economic models for multiple choice exams, the Eurozone crisis was at its peak, with Greece and Italy on the brink of disaster. This wasn't mentioned in our lectures and what we were learning didn't seem to have any relevance to understanding it. The elephant in the room was hard to ignore.

It is a harsh criticism of the way economics is taught, and judging from the outpouring of indecipherable mathematical articles published by grant- and promotion-hungry academic economists, it might well be justified. The students worry that upon graduation, their jargon-enshrouded courses ill-prepare them for the power and responsibility conferred upon them when they take up positions in important institutions such as central banks. They will be unable to consider what *really* matters in people's lives,

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The Econocracy

The Perils of Leaving Economics to the Experts

by Joe Earle, Cahal Moran,
and Zach Ward-Perkin
Manchester, 224 pp., \$22.95

and unable to communicate with the broader public.

The result is an econocracy, in which policy goals are set by technocrats using tools that "obscure political judgments" and which "is incompatible with liberal democracy." So they have set out to reform the economics curricula of, well, graduate schools everywhere.

The students make many powerful points, the most important of which are the stultifying way in which economics is taught; the exaggerated claims that model-building economists give the power of those tools; the near-complete reliance on analysis built along lines suggested by neoclassical economists; and excessive reliance on cost-benefit analysis.

I can only rely on their appraisal of the quality of the teaching. In my day, as economists of a certain age like to say, I was taught and later did teach from reports in that morning's newspaper about farm prices, inflation rates, and the like, and worked back to theoretical materials, on the assumption that interested students are more likely to learn something than those wondering why they had to take my required course.

If economics is, indeed, being taught in a way that excluded mention of the financial crisis while it was in progress, that is a pity and—as Robert Bork once answered when I asked him how he would describe his experience having taught both Clintons when he was on the faculty of the Yale Law School—

“a failure of pedagogy.” If this critique from the consumers of the education on offer persuades universities to upgrade their courses to offerings more useful to students, it will have made a large contribution.

And I agree that model builders, most especially the quants who still roam the offices of investment banks, would do well to shed their self-belief and heed John Maynard Keynes’s 87-year-old admonition: “If economists could manage to get themselves thought of as humble, competent people on a level with dentists, that would be splendid.” Alas, the title of Master of the Universe is difficult to turn down.

But I wonder if the self-styled Rethinkers have fully considered two of their other criticisms: of cost-benefit analysis and reliance on neoclassic economics. Tallies of the costs and benefits of various policy proposals, they say, “always involve choices, value judgments and assumptions that are inherently political in nature. . . . [T]here is rarely a neutral scientific way to make these calculations.” True. The answer is not to toss out cost-benefit analysis but to acknowledge the possible range of error in the computations and reveal the goals the economist had when he began measuring the costs and benefits. And to treat alternative computations as a basis for discussion, not a reason to denounce the motives of the dissenter.

Also, the complaint that “economics students are currently taught as if there is only one type of economics”—neoclassical economics—comes from students whose hands are not entirely clean. Of the 172 module course outlines the students reviewed, only 17 and 2 core modules mention non-neoclassical economic perspectives, while Cambridge does not mention them at all. But five of the modules that *do* mention non-neoclassical economics teach them late in the students’ stay at university and are “essay-based.” And “essay-writing is a skill students often lack after years of only doing mathematical derivations, and they understandably do not want to take the course in their final year when it counts most for their degree.”

So the lack of these courses may be

a demand-side, rather than a supply-side, failure: Given an opportunity to be exposed to non-neoclassical economics and to learn to write essays to boot, the students take cover in complaints that it is too late for that in their young careers.

But education does not end with the receipt of a bit of parchment proclaiming the ability of the recipient to survive poor teaching. One wonders what prevents them from dipping into the works not only of Keynes but of Karl Marx, Eugen Böhm von



Bawerk, Thorstein Veblen, Joseph Schumpeter, John R. Commons, Wesley Clair Mitchell, Robert J. Gordon (762 pages and nary an equation in his *The Rise and Fall of American Growth*), and other non-neoclassical economists who did not restrict themselves to economics as defined by these students’ professors. And they might try Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* for a bit of the broadening they so ardently seek.

As for the writing skills they feel they lack, but do not want to risk learning: Keynes (no slouch as a mathematician) found that an ability to write clear, compelling prose depended, in part, on the breadth of his interests, and was as important to his success as

the mathematical skills that he found analytically useful. In 1945-46, in the first annual report of the Arts Council that he chaired, he had this to say:

The day is not far off when the Economic Problem will take the back seat where it belongs, and the arena of the heart and that the head will be occupied, or reoccupied, by our real problems—the problems of life and of human relations, of creation and behavior and religion.

Still, one can only admire these students for spending the time and energy to attempt to make the economics curriculum more meaningful to them—and more relevant to the economic policy issues they are likely to confront. Unfortunately, a glance at any mathematics-laden issue of the leading economics journals suggests that this plea will fall on academic ears more attuned to the word “tenure” than to “I get it.”

In his splendid and sympathetic introduction to this book, Andrew Haldane, chief economist at the Bank of England (an institution he admits is guilty of “linguistic complexity”), points out that “the language used by economists has served as a barrier to entry. . . . Language is one way in which experts can preserve the rents associated with their subject-specific human capital.” Barriers to entry erected by trade groups don’t come tumbling down in the face of criticism; they fall when technology or repeated failure makes the members irrelevant. Which, despite their failure to predict the Great Recession, economists have not yet become.

The key movers of the “movement” that gave birth to this book were educated (or at least taught) at Manchester University in Great Britain. So they well know that their sovereign, who saw the crisis wipe some £25 million off the value of her portfolio, used the occasion of a reception at the London School of Economics to ask of the financial collapse, “Why did nobody notice it?” (The school’s research director later replied that “everyone thought they were doing the right thing.”) And one must, of course, applaud the students—not only for their efforts, but for their candor: “[We] are all keenly

aware,” they write, “that our economics education has not equipped us with the knowledge or skill to justify any authority we are given” to avoid policy errors in the future.

Whether they will follow up with the full disclosure now demanded of other products is uncertain. Not necessarily on their résumés, but perhaps in bold type at the front of any policy recommendation: “Warning: These policy prescriptions should only be taken with several grains of salt and are likely to have side effects we cannot predict.”

Whether stated in quadratic equations or readable prose, economic theory cannot bear the burden often placed upon it. If policies could be developed to guide complicated industrial economies to a permanent plateau of prosperity, to end “boom and bust” as the extraordinarily intelligent then-chancellor of the exchequer Gordon Brown believed he knew how to do, the well-trained economists of the Soviet Union would have twisted the right knobs and pushed the right buttons to prevent economic collapse; Alan Greenspan, with access to huge amounts of information, would have known when an asset-price increase became a “bubble”; and we would not be debating whether looser fiscal policy requires tighter monetary policy.

These students, as they engage the real world, will realize that worries about too much neoclassical doctrine, or too little, too much mathematics or too little were best left on their campuses. “Economics,” wrote Keynes, “is a method rather than a doctrine, an apparatus of the mind, a technique of thinking which helps its possessor to draw correct conclusions.” Or, as the great economist Joan Robinson put it, “a box of tools” that enables the workman to understand the relationships between individuals, society, markets, and government. They will soon stop worrying about “The Perils of Leaving Economics to the Experts.” Sensible policymakers won’t do that, and if they did, politicians wouldn’t abide it. Economists can recommend, but in democracies their, our, voice is only one among many. Good thing. ♦

BCA

Blind Venetians

A Renaissance capital imperiled by modernity.

BY CARROLL WILLIAM WESTFALL

If Venice dies, we will be left with nothing but the dozens of cities and suburbs with Venice in their name and Disney-like replicas in Las Vegas, Dubai, and Chongqing, along with yet another being proposed right next to Venice itself. If Venice dies, the world would lose “an unbearable challenge to the world of modernity,” as Manfredo Tafuri put it in 1993.

In this insightful, at times lyrical, book, Salvatore Settis argues that this is even more the case today, and that Italy is doing poorly in treating the patient. He offers medicine for the disease that has a global reach—and as we shall see, if we extrapolate his antidotes and apply them to the American patient, they may prove to be effective.

Settis treats Venice as Everycity and presents the role of modernity in inducing its morbidity. Seduced by modernity and overwhelmed by tourists, it has neglected its soul: The city’s population has declined from its peak in 1951 of 175,000 to less than 60,000 now, and the fabric and detailed dealings of the city’s life have been turned over to tourism. To serve it, the Venetians have given their homes over to hotels, becoming commuters from the mainland.

Venice is unique and modernity does not “prize the uniqueness of each city, but rather the homogenization of all cities.” In succumbing to modernity, Venice has accepted modernity’s “economically motivated real estate speculation and the social prob-

If Venice Dies

by Salvatore Settis

translated by Andre Naffis-Sahely
New Vessel, 180 pp., \$16.95

lems left in their wake, shifting the emphasis to aesthetic, technological, or ecological values.” The rest of the world is rapidly embracing these values, which are most visibly embodied in the skyscraper. Skyscrapers have proliferated, rising ever higher with ever more bizarre forms to satisfy aesthetic and capital competition and to accommodate the world’s population that is moving from barren rural pastures to elusive economic prosperity in megaregions that approach 40 million in population.

This new symbol of modernity visits Venice daily as “skyscraper ships . . . veritable spaceships of modernity, temples of consumerism which have annihilated Venice’s skyline.” In 2013, 13 arrived in a single day, but Italian law now limits them to 2 per day—2 more than are allowed within 2.3 miles of Italy’s shore elsewhere. They bring health hazards and dangers to Venice’s delicate fabric and disgorge a million-and-a-half day-trippers every year with a net financial loss to the city. Other death threats are in the natural and man-made environments that Rome has spent lavish sums to remedy, only to go into the trough of venality and corruption that have been enriching insiders on the peninsula even before there was a Venice.

To protect Venice from death, the Italian government and private interests have concluded that it “will eventually have to adapt one way or the other and comply” with modernity. To that

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end, vast commercial developments are already underway on the contiguous mainland, and forests of towers are proposed to house refugees from the lagoon with a sub-lagoon subway to carry them back and forth to Piazza San Marco.

Salvatore Settis proposes a very different medicine, one with little chance of success. He would have a code of ethics direct architects to resist complicity in modernity's ravages and reinstitute the traditional way of building. And he would reinvest aesthetic values in traditional practices and make them servants to civil, ethical values. This flies in the face of the ideology of architecture that serves that modernity that puts the "exchange-value" of property above its social function.

Settis's opposition to modernity depends on the "ethical self-restraint" of *civismo*, or citizenship. It requires rejecting *any* role for skyscrapers and restoring the 1,500 years of experience gained through the careful, incremental additions and modifications to Venice's physical fabric by Venetians acting as stewards. If successful, Venice could remain a midget while the rest of the world watches the tall guys play. But short of banning non-Venetians' entry, would this not simply exacerbate the problem?

Settis frames his proposals within recent continental, especially French, theories that belong to the legal tradition of legislated, rather than natural, rights: The necessary laws are already in the statutes and provisions in the Italian constitution—although, as he acknowledges, they are seldom observed. Honoring them would renew sociability and allow citizens and their associations to reclaim the rights of the city for citizens and foster, in Venice's soul, the "harmony between the concepts of city and citizenship." Neighbors would, once again, enjoy their neighbors as they exchange pleasantries, converse about families, complaints, and changes, and participate in civic institutions. This is, indeed, the *civismo* traditional to Venice.

Years ago, a friend, a member of a family among the new arrivals from Vicenza 500 years ago (and therefore limited to being bankers), introduced

me to a "thousand-year-old Venetian"—that is, a member of a family that has participated in one or another municipal commission for a millennium. My friend noted, even then, that Venice was losing a quality that Rome had already lost after it engaged modernity with the automobile's arrival. Wealthy and privileged Romans now rode around isolated in their large automobiles while Venetians still walked, which allowed *civismo* to retain a democratic quality through the mixing and encounters among diverse citizens in the public realm.

tradition is the very antithesis of the ideology of the architecture that serves modernity. Modernity's global hegemony casts Venice in the role of a canary in the mineshaft whose song is growing weaker in America as modernity extends its reach into those places whose value resides exclusively in their potential for financial gain with disregard for what Settis calls the cultural and civil capital of the city's soul.

America's cities and landscapes have stronger protections against the ravages of modernity than in Italy



Cruising into Venice (2014)

When *civismo* builds a beautiful, mature city, it reveals a centuries-long commitment to having the new serve the common good that has embraced that city's unique visual qualities and caused any new building to be a fitting neighbor to its predecessors. This is the constantly renewed tradition that in Venice, as in any city whose soul is alive in the present, has breathed the invigorating air found in accepting the past as a gift to the present and an obligation to the future. The Venice we love is the result of "an act of perpetual renewal," the ongoing evidence of the new emerging within the old. If, Settis warns, "this necessary, constant motion would ever stop, it would exact an incredibly high price: death."

That essential role for ever-renewing

(and elsewhere) because the American natural-right legal structure puts more authority in citizens than in the workings of government officials. The primacy of property's "exchange value"—which allowed the barbaric destruction of New York's Penn Station in 1963—was countered by a preservation ordinance that brings citizens' voices to decisions about the city's *forma urbis*. New York's measure was a latecomer compared to the first such ordinance, the one that Charleston, South Carolina, instituted in 1931 to assure continued success, such as the prevention in 1920 of the destruction of a valued mansion to construct a gasoline station in its colonial center.

Charleston's subsequent success with preserving the old while building the new has led to its attracting

nearly four million tourists a year. Elsewhere, modernity and its skyscrapers have been at work while Charleston's 128,000 residents have resisted, protecting the city's fragile grace and beauty. (They benefited, too, from the long-term guidance of Joseph Riley, mayor from 1975 until last year: Once, when a developer offered to build a 20-story tower to stimulate economic vitality in Charleston, Riley replied that he would be happy to help him build what the city could use as a stimulant: four 5-story buildings.)

If *Venice Dies* can alert citizens everywhere to the canary's song and strengthen their resolve to protect and constantly renew the unique treasures they call home. But the "unbearable challenge of modernity," which endangers their continued success in protecting our valued physical heritage, is "presentism," Settis's shorthand for the belief that neither the past nor the future is as valuable as the present. "The voracious presentism that has ravaged cities and landscapes in the name of profit," he writes, "is . . . to be understood as a social pathology, which should be corrected by an education that values the ethic of responsibility and enforcement of the laws."

It might be too late for that, since "presentism" is at the heart of the ideology of the architecture and urbanism that serves modernity. Still, there is an alternative to presentism that has proven successful. It rejects the denatured modernity that is building skyscrapers rising from desolate landscapes and suburbs, shopping malls, and office parks, separating central cities from rural districts. It is the method citizens used in Venice for 1,500 years, and for centuries in building Charleston: the continued commitment of citizens to a tradition of building places where they can pursue and enjoy the fruits of citizenship. Italian cities can hive off regional variants of Venice and Florence, and variations of Charleston and other American meccas can proliferate here as well. Cities from Manhattan to Everytown can let their past guide their future as they accommodate people by building up-to-date

regional versions of the best old towns and districts of cities.

Salvatore Settis does not take this route, but his basic point offers reasons for doing so. A city's death occurs when it loses its soul, and a city's soul resides in the "harmony between the

concepts of city and citizenship." In America, more so than elsewhere, this principle has the potential for resisting modernity and preserving the ongoing task of a civil people intent on building cities that allow every individual to pursue happiness. ♦



Hail to the Chieftain

The making of the American who beat the Hun.

BY MITCHELL YOCKELSON

In 1917, the war was deadlocked. The previous year, British and French armies suffered horrendous casualties at Verdun and the Somme, and during the latter bloodbath, more than 19,000 of the king's soldiers died on a single day, July 1, 1916. To the east, Russia was in the midst of revolution, and a year later, the country would drop out of the war. The kaiser's army also suffered, but maintained the strategic upper hand while tucked in concrete, entrenched positions along the Western Front. At home, a British naval blockade kept the German people hungry.

Young American men as reinforcements, the Allies thought, were the key to breaking the stalemate and ultimate achieving victory. But President Woodrow Wilson thought otherwise. With good reason, he could have gone to war in 1915, when a German U-boat sank the *Lusitania* and 128 Americans perished. But Wilson did not and, in 1916, won a second term after promising to keep America out of the war.

The next year, Germany prodded Wilson with unrestricted attacks on American merchant shipping and sought to form a Mexican alliance. The intercepted Zimmermann Telegram exposed Germany's offer to help Mex-

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My Fellow Soldiers

General John Pershing and the Americans Who Helped Win the Great War

by Andrew Carroll
Penguin, 416 pp., \$30

ico regain territory lost to the United States in 1848, if Mexico went to war with America. This caused Wilson to reverse course and, in a speech to Congress on April 2, 1917, he asked for a declaration of war against Germany. Both the House and Senate swiftly agreed, and four days later, the United States joined Belgium, France, and Great Britain in a quest to keep the "world safe for democracy."

As commander in chief, Wilson wisely kept American troops independent. They would fight under General John J. Pershing's American Expeditionary Forces (AEF). *My Fellow Soldiers* tells Pershing's story along with "the Americans who helped win the Great War" through their letters and memoirs. In this ambitious book, Andrew Carroll quotes volunteers who served before the United States entered the war, war correspondents, political leaders, and, of course, the doughboys who went over the top against artillery and machine-gun fire.

General Pershing takes center stage, and Carroll gives him plenty of room. Largely forgotten today—even though his name adorns numerous landmarks around America—a century ago John

J. Pershing was a military hero. At West Point, fellow cadets revered him; in Cuba, he didn't flinch while under fire; and in the Philippines, he tamed insurgents with compassion and diplomacy. Returning to West Point as an instructor, Pershing's manner was cold and aloof to cadets. Behind his back, they cruelly called him "Black Jack"—a dig at his prior command of African-American troops.

Pershing had married the daughter of a senior senator who chaired the Military Affairs Committee, and his career blossomed. Promoted to brigadier general, life was seemingly perfect until the summer of 1915, when tragedy struck. While he was on border duty in El Paso, Pershing's wife and three of their four children died when a fire destroyed their home at San Francisco's Presidio. Devastated by the loss, Pershing relied on his Army service for solace: When the Mexican bandit Pancho Villa raided Columbus, New Mexico, in March 1916—7 American soldiers and 15 civilians killed—the Wilson administration retaliated with a punitive expedition commanded by Pershing. Villa proved elusive, but the year-long campaign wasn't for nothing: Pershing adapted to the modern warfare of motor vehicles and airplanes, confirming him as the natural choice to command the AEF.

In France, Pershing slowly built his army while sparring with Allied commanders over how and when American troops would see action. The answer came at the end of May 1918, when two American regiments engaged the Germans outside the village of Cantigny. The doughboys were bloodied but victorious—and for the time being, Pershing silenced his critics. More battles followed. A thousand Marines were killed or wounded on the first day of the Battle of Belleau Wood: It took until the end of June before stubborn German troops were driven from the wheat fields and woods. At nearby Château-Thierry, American machine-gunners stopped the Germans on the Marne, and the German advance on Paris was halted.

The real test came in the autumn of 1918, when Pershing created and led

the First Army and launched its baptism of fire against the German-held Saint-Mihiel salient. To everyone's surprise, the battle went off without a hitch and the enemy was swept away. But the celebration was brief: The more daunting Meuse-Argonne operation was less than two weeks away.

The attack was planned and executed by Pershing's operations officer, George C. Marshall, the Americans would initially attack across a 24-mile front through the dense Argonne Forest and up steep hills near the Meuse River. Besides Marshall, taking part in the battle were several other future leaders of World War II: Douglas MacArthur commanded the Rainbow (42nd) Division; George S. Patton led tanks until he was severely wounded; Harry S. Truman directed a National Guard artillery battery.

Two days into the battle, the doughboys were stopped cold by German resistance, and the attack stalled. Pershing was notably unsympathetic and demanding: Field commanders were dressed down or dismissed. Away from the front, however, Pershing was very different: In Paris, he relaxed with

the young Romanian portrait artist Micheline Resco. The two had met shortly after his arrival in France and maintained a clandestine relationship that lasted until Pershing's death in 1948. (Two years before, they had discreetly married in Pershing's Walter Reed suite.)

After various fits and starts, heavy casualties, and a major command reorganization, Pershing's troops prevailed in the Meuse-Argonne and after 47 days the Germans were soundly defeated. On the other fronts, Allied armies were also battering the enemy, forcing the Germans to sign an armistice on November 11. For Pershing, the triumph was bittersweet: Of the 1.2 million Americans who took part in the battle, over 26,000 had been killed and four times as many wounded.


The title of *My Fellow Soldiers* comes from a general order Pershing issued to thank his troops before returning home. Like Pershing's note, it is a fitting tribute to the more than two million Americans who stepped forward a century ago to rescue the Allies and bring the United States onto the world's stage. ♦

BCA

Dancing in Space

The glory of the choreography of Miro Magloire.

BY CHRISTOPHER ATAMIAN

n the evening of February 11, Miro Magloire presented his New Chamber Ballet in a program of works set to music by mainly contemporary composers. With no sets, lighting, or wings, you don't get much more *in medias res* than attending Magloire's intimate and deliciously choreographed

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pieces. And the recipe that Magloire has come up with is a winner: one part originality, one part hard work, and one part earnest love of dance.

Why do I like Magloire's choreography so much? In a word: integrity. In a dance world increasingly flooded with cabaret and Broadway-influenced razzmatazz, that counts for a lot. Integrity of music, dance, and space form a triumvirate, of sorts—akin, perhaps, to the unities of classical theater. Magloire's company is like a small family, and in February he used his favorite musicians, the brilliant pianist

Melody Fader and virtuoso violinist Doori Na.

The performance took place in the intimate setting of City Center's Studio 5, which looks and feels like it came out of the 1940s or '50s, an adventure in retro-chic. Audience members were seated in the round (in a hexagon, actually) in this small space, and Magloire introduced each dance and the performers. It's a custom that has endeared him to his small flock of followers, who feel as if they are getting a view into the choreographer's mind with each new dance.

"At this point, my choreography is partly informed by the space itself," Magloire explains. Technically, chamber music is defined as a group of musicians of 12 or fewer, performing without a conductor, so the company's name is well chosen: "After the first few years of presenting to the public, we realized that we needed a name. So we picked this one. It seemed to fit what we were doing."

Magloire's trajectory as dancer and artist is also unique. He didn't attend Juilliard or one of Europe's famed ballet schools or conservatories. He began as an adolescent pianist composing music at the Musikhochschule in Cologne. There he studied with the Argentine-born Mauricio Kagel, a contemporary and colleague of modernist giants such as Stockhausen and Boulez, which may explain his affinity for contemporary composers. And under the rigid European system, by the time Magloire decided on a career as a choreographer he had already passed the age limit imposed by German dance conservatories. So he came to America, where he enrolled at Alvin Ailey and Martha Graham: "In the United States, as long as you can pay tuition, you can find a place to study."

This particular example of capitalist serendipity is welcome, as the world would be an artistically poorer place had Miro Magloire not brought his talents to the stage. And his approach is deceptively refreshing: "My respon-

sibility is twofold," he explains. "To my performers, on the one hand, and to my audience on the other. It is a fine balancing act." This most recent presentation followed in that tradition. Some pieces worked better than others, but the overall quality of the dances and narrative (as well as the four contemporary composers) he presented made it my favorite chamber ballet performance to date.

Magloire began the evening with *Fast Forward*, set to Beethoven's lively and

was an abstract universe, but their wary, careful moves and intense gaze lent human warmth. At times, the dancers pumped their fists forward. Then one would squat while the other held on to her and pulled herself onto her back or arms. Then they reversed roles.

The third dance, *Anna's Last Day*, is a ghost story of sorts, Anna (Holway) and her sister (Atkins) re-enacting the sister's suicide as Anna watches horrified and helpless. The bare setting—two black chairs seated next to one another—served as a locus for the unfolding drama. Atkins remained seated throughout while Holway, in a long white evening gown, got up and danced around her gently, at times, and at others vigorously twirled in ever more desperate circles. They sat next to each other as well, eating from imaginary jars, and to the dismay of her sister, Atkins finally drank poison: She grabbed her stomach, pivoted, and fell to the ground, hair ragged, a forlorn and panicked look on her face.

The evening's only première, *Sunrise*, set to music by Ryan Brown, was notably lighter in tone. Attired in colorful pastels of pink, yellow, brown, and magenta, the four dancers (Atkins, Cassidy Hall, Holway, and Neff) held hands in the round, as if in an ancient fertility dance. They changed positions, pivoted off each other, then fell to the floor, forming different geometric positions. They accelerated, spun, and jumped in the air, sylph-like. They threw arms up and back down to their sides. Then all sat down.

The evening's last performance, the wonderfully intense *Dark Forest*, set to the music of Michel Galante, was danced by Brown, Finch, Hall, and Neff, all attired in black leotards with fringed sleeves. They moved around, gracefully lifting and supporting each other in varied poses—a quiet end to another lovely evening at the New Chamber Ballet, and a glimpse into the inner workings of one choreographer's agile mind. ♦



Gracie Holway, Amber Neff in 'Gravity'

rhythmic *Rondo for Violin and Piano*. Sarah Atkins, Traci Finch, and Cassidy Hall performed in pairs, wearing black one-piece leotards with short skirts, designed by Sarah Thea. Their quick footwork and gracious arms matched the sparkling music. This formal, finely constructed trio built to a delicate crescendo, full of sharp jetés and quick changes of direction, a perfect opening ballet. Another trio—*Gravity*—followed, performed by Elizabeth Brown, Gracie Holway, and Amber Neff, and set to a solo violin by Friedrich Cerha, a contemporary Austrian composer best known for his completion of Alban Berg's opera *Lulu*. The dancers moved through the uneasy, dissonant music supporting and leaning on each other, sometimes in threes and sometimes in pairs while the odd woman out carefully watched the unfolding action.

They moved slowly and deliberately, as if in their own private world, keeping their eyes focused on each other. It

Gorilla Theater

Sometimes, but not always, the remake is better than the original. BY JOHN PODHORETZ

I was, and I remain, one of the few people on this earth willing to state for the record that I thought the 2005 Peter Jackson version of *King Kong* was terrific. Indeed, I've long been of the opinion that most people who have condemned that picture didn't actually see it. It's long and self-indulgent, yes; but it's staggering as a piece of cinematic craft—with an absolutely gorgeous re-creation of Depression-era New York City. The middle section, on the South Seas island where natives and prehistoric creatures interact with a giant gorilla, has a knockout series of chilling sequences. It flags toward the end, with Kong in the Big Apple, but all in all it's an achievement.

Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy had triumphed both with critics and audiences, so he was ripe for a take-down, and taken down he certainly was. To this day, people think it was a massive flop when, in fact, it was a modest success (only modest, in part because it was the most expensive movie ever made up to that time). His elevation to Spielberg/Lucas status was canceled, and then he went off and made three movies out of a single 300-page novel called *The Hobbit*. So the hell with him.

What's even more shocking, perhaps, is that I had the same favorable opinion about the 1976 version of *King Kong* with Jeff Bridges, Charles Grodin, and an unknown blonde named Jessica Lange. (Think about that cast. Amazing.) It takes the form of a screwball comedy, in which Grodin and Bridges seem to be contesting for Lange—only

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Kong: Skull Island

Directed by Jordan Vogt-Roberts



to be replaced in her potential affections by the big gorilla she meets in a jungle. Like Jackson's movie, this Dino De Laurentiis (remember him?) production was insanely expensive and was universally deemed overproduced, especially because De Laurentiis built a 40-foot model of Kong and placed it in the plaza of the newly built World Trade Center.

It was the South Tower that Kong climbed with Lange in his paw in 1976 rather than the Empire State Building, as had been the case with the 1933 original, so the movie might have an unintentionally disturbing resonance today.

To be honest, I liked both later Kongs far more than the 1933 flick (which I saw several times as a kid because it was an RKO picture and RKO owned Channel 9 in New York City, so it showed *King Kong* on the Million Dollar Movie at least once a month). I understand that this 1933 classic practically invented the special-effects picture, but even as a kid I found it clunky and wooden and the incredibly painstaking stop-motion effects silly rather than transporting.

To say that you don't think much of the original but love the lambasted remakes is to commit heresy against cinematic sentimentality. So burn me at the stake.

Which brings us to *Kong: Skull Island*, the latest in what will evidently be a centuries-long history of insanely expensive reboots. This one cost \$185 million, about a third cheaper than Jackson's but almost double the De Laurentiis version if you take account of inflation. I think I've established that if *Kong: Skull Island* were good, I would have no problem saying so. But it isn't good.

For one thing, Kong has somehow gone from being 40 feet high to 100 feet high, evidently so he can battle Godzilla in a sequel. (This is not a joke.) So when he first encounters this movie's Fay Wray—played by Brie Larson, who has followed up her Oscar with a performance very dependent on the fact that the T-shirt she is wearing is three sizes too small for her—he's basically 295 feet taller than she. This means that it's not even clear how Kong can see her, much less develop a crush on her.

Then, when a demented Vietnam-era colonel played by Samuel L. Jackson announces that he and his men are going to kill the beast, even this conservative hater of the film *Platoon* figured they really ought to frag him right on the spot. But they don't—so they die, of course, which is some kind of metaphor for the Vietnam war. I'm not sure what kind of metaphor, to tell you the truth, and neither is *Kong: Skull Island*—which is understandable, since its 32-year-old director, Jordan Vogt-Roberts, was minus-9 when the last helicopter lifted off the Saigon embassy grounds in April 1975.

In short (get it?), rather than bother with this one, if you simply have to see a picture about a very large and misunderstood gorilla right now, give Jackson's movie a try, or De Laurentiis's. Or let it go. After all, these are movies about a large and misunderstood gorilla. Surely you have something better to do with your time.

"Sen. Al Franken of Minnesota blasted Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch during his confirmation hearing Tuesday over a 2016 dissent, calling the ruling 'absurd' and saying it made him question Gorsuch's judgment."

—Business Insider, March 21, 2017

PARODY

Nomination of the Honorable Neil M. Gorsuch
to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States
Senate Judiciary Committee
Tuesday, March 21, 2017

TRANSCRIPT (cont'd):

as a kite at 3 a.m. with the munchies?

MR. GORSUCH: No, senator, I don't believe I've ever done that.

MR. FRANKEN: Well, frankly, judge, I find that hard to believe. But let's move on. Suppose you've got a fresh tube of toothpaste. Ever just squeeze from the middle?

MR. GORSUCH: No, senator, as best as I recall, I've never done that either. I prefer a more orderly approach, from the back of the tube forward and rolling it up as I go along.

MR. FRANKEN: I'm sorry, but that sort of restraint is simply absurd. And it's making me concerned about how strict a constructionist you'd be on the High Court. Let me ask you about the way you eat a fried egg. Because I've spoken to a few of your Harvard Law School classmates who have witnessed your eating habits at the Hark. One claims you prefer to eat the egg white first and then save the yolk for last. Is that accurate?

MR. GORSUCH: Yes, senator. I just find it less messy that way.

MR. FRANKEN: Again, this troubles me. Because if that's how you eat a fried egg, what does that portend for the future of *Roe v. Wade* and *Obergefell*? Now permit me to dig a little deeper. Let's say you're a judge in a Monopoly case.

MR. GORSUCH: You mean a corporate monopoly case?

MR. FRANKEN: No, I mean the board game Monopoly. Let's say you're the banker. The players all want to put cash from taxes and fees and such in the Free Parking space. It's a waste of space. Everybody does it. How would you rule?

MR. GORSUCH: Well, senator, it really isn't for the banker to decide. If the Parker Brothers had wanted the Free Parking space to be a jackpot, it would have been stated in the rules, which it is not.

MR. FRANKEN: Let's say you're replacing a roll of toilet paper. Do you have it roll toward the